

# **Employee Handbook**

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# **Employee Handbook**

## **Section VII: Educational Program**

### **A. Program**

#### **1. Curriculum**

Head Teachers at St. Thomas's Day School are responsible for teaching language arts, math, and social studies for their designated grade levels. The school uses published curriculum materials as resources for books, lessons, and activities, as well as to determine what should be taught at each grade level.

##### **a. Language Arts**

St. Thomas's Day School currently uses McGraw Hill *Wonders* as its language arts program. *Wonders* is a comprehensive program that provides a variety of reading materials, as well as guidance about grade level standards and expectations for spelling, grammar, reading, and writing.

##### **b. Math**

St. Thomas's Day School currently uses Pearson EnVision Math 2.0 as its' math program. Pearson EnVision Math 2.0 is a published program that strives to provide an understanding of math concepts through problem-solving, small-group interaction, and visual learning with a focus on reasoning and modeling.

##### **c. Social Studies**

Teachers at St. Thomas's Day School use a variety of grade-level books, materials and resources to teach social studies. In addition, field trips are used to supplement the learning that happens in the classroom. Plays and performances often reflect learning that has taken place in social studies.

#### **2. Specials Classes**

Each week, students at St. Thomas's Day School attend a variety of specials, including Art, Library, Drama, Science, Spanish, Music, Technology, Religious Studies, and Physical Education.

#### **3. Half Classes**

Whenever possible, specials are scheduled in half groups, giving the classroom teacher the opportunity to work with the other half of the group. Half groups allow for differentiation, small group and individualized instruction, and project-based learning.

#### 4. Alternative Learning Spaces

- **The Makerspace**

The Makerspace is a collaborative work space located on the first floor across from the 2nd Grade classroom that is used for designing, creating, learning, exploring, and sharing ideas. It allows students to explore concepts in a creative and unstructured ways using critical thinking and problem solving skills. When not in use for Technology/Makerspace classes, the Makerspace is available for tutoring, small group instruction, or research. Students must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

- **The Library**

When not in use for Library classes (typically 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.), the Library is available for tutoring, small group instruction, or research. Students must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

- **The Passive Space**

The Passive Space is the fenced area located outside the 2-6 classrooms. It is accessible through any of the 2-6 classrooms or through gates on either end. It was designed to provide students with a quiet place to work and/or socialize. Students may read, write, talk, play quiet games, eat, garden, or hold group discussions in the space. Students should be discouraged from running or making loud noises that might disturb other classes, and must be supervised by a teacher when using the space.

- **The Lobby**

Fifth and sixth grade students may use the lobby as an alternative learning space to study or work on assignments. Books and materials should be kept neat and students should remain quiet while working there.

- **Hallways**

Hallways may be used as learning spaces or extensions of the classroom. Out of respect for other classes and people working, students should remain quiet and orderly while using the hallway. In addition, they should clean up any materials used.

- **Stairway**

Sixth Graders may use the main stairway as a place to study or work on assignments. However, there must be a clear path up the stairway for people to pass at all times. Books and materials should be kept neat rather than sprawled out across the steps. Students should remain quiet and maintain a working environment.

## **5. Schedule Changes**

At times, teachers may need to make arrangements with other teachers to switch class times or make small changes to their schedules. For planning and safety purposes, the Assistant Head of School should be informed of all such changes immediately. Any major changes should be approved by the Assistant Head of School ahead of time.

# **B. Student Assessment**

## **1. Observations/ Running Records**

Conducting and recording informal observations of student learning on a regular basis is an effective instructional practice that is highly encouraged at St. Thomas's Day School. The observations will help teachers get to know their students, differentiate instruction, and plan appropriately. In addition, running records will help teachers recognize growth over time, be prepared for parent-teacher conferences, and share information in staff meetings.

## **2. Curriculum Assessments**

Throughout each semester, teachers should administer curriculum assessments regularly to monitor student growth and progress. After each math topic and/or reading unit, an assessment should be given and scores should be recorded on the digital records located on the Google Drive under Record Keeping. On average, assessments in both math and reading should be given about once a month. When recording test scores, teachers should also record areas of difficulty that each student experienced. Since St. Thomas's Day School only uses purchased curriculums as a guide or reference, test scores may be lower than expected and will identify information that has not been taught. Assessments and test scores are used to measure mastery and identify patterns in learning.

## **3. Report Cards**

Students report cards are prepared and mailed to parents/guardians two times per year by teachers at St. Thomas's Day School: January and June. Report cards are used to evaluate how students are progressing in specific areas of the curriculum, as well as how they are developing socially, emotionally, and physically. Children in Kindergarten through 4th Grade receive narrative report cards, while students in Grades 5 and 6 receive letter grades. Written comments by teachers are included in all report cards.

Based on best practices regarding grading, we use the following guidelines for how you should grade your students.

Test/ Quizzes	60%
Projects/ Assignments	15%
Participation/ Effort	15%
Homework 10%	10%

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C	77-79

The Technology Integrator will provide support in writing and generating report cards.

#### **4. Specials Teacher Student Comments Sheet**

Prior to parent/guardian teacher conferences, Special Teachers give Head Teachers comments describing student performance in the special subject area. These comments are shared with parents/guardians at the parent/guardian teacher conference that are scheduled twice a year.

#### **5. Standardized Tests**

The purpose of testing at St. Thomas's Day School is:

- to provide students with experience taking standardized tests.
- to provide a standardized profile of a student's growth and learning over time.
- to use test results as a tool for program assessment.

Test results are mailed to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians with questions are encouraged to make an appointment with the Assistant Head of School to discuss the results in detail. St. Thomas's Day School administers the following standardized assessments:

**a. Boehm Test of Basic Concepts**

The Boehm Test of Basic Concepts is a standardized assessment designed to assess children's mastery of concepts considered necessary for academic achievement in the first years of school. At St. Thomas's Day School, we use the Boehm in Kindergarten to monitor student progress and screen students who may be at risk for learning difficulties.

**b. Children's Progress Academic Assessment**

The Children's Progress Academic Assessment is a child-friendly, formative assessment that is appropriate for Grades K-2. The test is a diagnostic adaptive assessment that is given on the computer and adjusts in difficulty to student performance. The assessment produces instant reports, as well as recommended activities to drive instruction. St. Thomas's Day School uses Children's Progress to assess student growth, to monitor student learning trajectories, and to guide instruction.

**c. Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP5)**

The CTP5 (Comprehensive Testing Program) is a standardized test published by the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) that is administered to all students at St. Thomas's Day School in Grades 3-6. The purpose of CTP5 is to assess student growth and performance at the time of testing. This enables the school to identify strengths and weaknesses at an individual and group level. CTP5 is considered a "low stakes" assessment, intended to help teachers and administrators make decisions about curriculum and classroom instruction.

**d. Gates-MacGinitie Reading Assessment**

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test is a standardized reading test that is administered to all students in Grades 1-6 at the end of each grade. It is designed to assess student reading levels throughout the course of their education. Normed against national standards, teachers are able to compare individual students and/or classes to groups of students at the same grade level across the United States.

**C. Student Concerns**

The Assistant Head of School plays a key role in supporting classroom teachers in identifying, as well as developing and monitoring program adjustments for children who may require supportive help, e.g., remediation, accelerated programs, social/emotional needs, etc. The Assistant Head of School confers with and works closely with each teacher to provide support for children within the school setting. This support can take various forms: diagnostic assessments, observations, remediation, program adjustments, placement, referrals outside of the school, etc. The primary

goal in serving children with special needs is to provide support within the normal classroom setting. In all cases, it is essential to keep parents/guardians informed about their child's needs.

### **1. Academic Concerns**

When a teacher determines that a student is experiencing academic difficulties, he/she should complete a Request for Academic Support form and return it to the Assistant Head of School. The Request for Academic Support form can be found on the Faculty Intranet.

- Student referrals are followed by a meeting with the referring teacher and Assistant Head of School to gather background information and consider possible in-house support. The Assistant Head of School may observe the child and administer a diagnostic evaluation if such an evaluation is necessary.
- The teacher and the Assistant Head of School will meet to review all available information about the child and outline possible strategies to address the presenting needs.
- Following the in-house meeting, a parent conference will be scheduled to inform the parents/guardians as to how the school plans to support the child.
- If a child's needs are beyond the resources of the school, given the nature of the child's needs, the Assistant Head of School may recommend the family seek outside help. A recommendation of this nature is made only after the resources of the school have been exhausted.
- If a diagnostic report is obtained from an outside agency, it will be kept in the student's permanent record, which is locked in the Records Closet across from the Assistant Head of School's office on the third floor. Diagnostic reports may not be removed from the permanent record in the Records Closet.
- After receiving a diagnostic report, the Assistant Head of School will meet with the appropriate teachers to review the recommendations and if necessary help design and implement an individual program within the classroom setting and with the support of available school resources.
- The teacher and the Assistant Head of School will meet regularly to monitor the child's progress.



Note: The Head of School is kept informed about the child in question at every step of the way and in some cases may be part of the in-house and parent conferences.

## **2. Behavioral Concerns**

All students at St. Thomas's Day School are expected to abide by the Student Code of Conduct. When students exhibit behavior that is not consistent with the standards at St. Thomas's Day School, the teacher should refer to the Discipline Policy in the Faculty Handbook for guidance about appropriate consequences.

- St. Thomas's Day School believes that a partnership between home and school is essential for a child's success in school. As a result, parents/guardians should be kept informed about a child's behavior at all times. Teachers should share expectations and ask for parental support in implementing those expectations.
- Whenever a student exhibits repeated behavioral issues, teachers should begin to keep a running record documenting all observations, concerns, events, and conversations that took place on a Record of Events and Observations form (found on the Faculty Intranet). The Record of Events and Observations should be shared with the Head of School and the Assistant Head of School. It will help to assess and support the child, support the teacher, and provide detailed evidence of what happened or what was seen over time.
- If continued infractions persist, the Head of School, Assistant Head of School, teacher, student, and family of the student will work together to try to find an appropriate course of action.
- If a child's needs are beyond the resources of the school, given the nature of the child's needs, the Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School may recommend the family seek outside help. A recommendation of this nature is made only after the resources of the school have been exhausted. In rare cases, parents/guardians may be counseled to find a more appropriate school setting.

## **3. Social/ Emotional Concerns**

Teachers should seek the support of the Assistant Head of School whenever they observe children exhibiting inappropriate social and emotional behaviors. A Call for Help form (found on the Faculty Intranet) should be completed as soon as possible.

- When the Assistant Head of School receives a Call for Help, he/she will immediately inform the Head of School.

- The Assistant Head of School will ask 3 teachers other than the referring teacher to complete Request for Additional Information forms (found on the Faculty Intranet).
- The classroom teacher and the Assistant Head of School will meet to review all available information about the child and outline possible strategies to address the presenting needs.
- Following the in-house meeting, a parent conference will be scheduled to inform the parents/guardians as to how the school plans to support the child.
- If a child's needs are beyond the resources of the school, given the nature of the child's needs, the Assistant Head of School may recommend the family seek outside help. A recommendation of this nature is made only after the resources of the school have been exhausted. In rare cases, parents/guardians may be counseled to find a more appropriate school setting.
- If a diagnostic report is obtained from an outside agency, it will be kept in the student's permanent record, which is locked in the Records Closet across from the Assistant Head of School's office on the third floor. Diagnostic reports may not be removed from the permanent record in the Records Closet.
- After receiving a diagnostic report, the Assistant Head of School will meet with the appropriate teachers to review the recommendations and if necessary help design and implement an individual program within the classroom setting and with the support of available school resources.
- The teacher and the Assistant Head of School will meet regularly to monitor the child's progress.

Note: The Head of School is kept informed about the child in question at every step of the way and in some cases may be part of the in-house and parent conferences.

#### **4. Student Referrals ( New Haven Board of Education)**

When in-house support is not sufficiently meeting a student's needs, the Assistant Head of School may recommend to a family that they have the student evaluated. Since St. Thomas's Day School is located in New Haven, CT it is required to use the New Haven Board of Education to make referrals for evaluation. The Assistant Head will prepare an official referral based on information gathered by the school over time.

Prior to submitting the request for evaluation, the Assistant Head of School, along with the classroom teacher, and any other staff members who work closely with the child, will need to gather information and evidence that the child needs an evaluation. That information needs to include:

- Samples of the student's work
- Report cards
- Evaluations and observations demonstrating student difficulty
- Evidence of what was done to provide support
- Evidence that the support was not effective

Once the New Haven Board of Education receives the referral, it will set up a PPT Request meeting with St. Thomas's Day School, the child's parents/guardians and members of the Board of Education.

If the student requires testing, the Board of Education will send specialists out to the school to evaluate the child. Then, they will have a Determination of Eligibility Meeting with the school, the parents/guardians, and the Board of Education to determine what, if any, services New Haven Public Schools can provide.

Since St. Thomas's Day School is an independent school rather than a public school, the New Haven Public Schools are not required to provide services for students enrolled at St. Thomas's. If eligible for services, however, New Haven will provide consultation and recommendations for teachers working with the child.

Sometimes, families opt to obtain a private psycho-educational evaluation to get information and recommendations for student learning. St. Thomas's Day School will do the best it can to make accommodations for students based on those evaluations. That being said, St. Thomas's Day School is not equipped to accommodate students with special needs. If the school is not able to meet the needs of a student, the family will be counseled to move to a school that can address the child's needs more effectively.

## **5. Educational Accommodations**

St. Thomas's Day School is not equipped to provide individualized educational programs for students with severe physical, cognitive, or mental disabilities. The school does comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will make reasonable accommodations to known disabilities of a student to assist the student in meeting the academic and behavioral performance standards of the school.

Parents/guardians of students needing such accommodations should advise the Assistant Head of School a. The school will undertake an interactive process, involving parents/guardians, health care providers, and school faculty and staff to determine appropriate accommodations. Such accommodations may include restructuring work assignments, and/or modifying the testing environment. No accommodations shall fundamentally alter the school's educational program, and all students, regardless of disability, will be held to the school's standards for academic achievement and personal conduct.

## **D. Record Keeping**

### **1. Student/Class Records**

#### **a. Head Teachers**

Head Teachers are responsible for keeping student records of daily work, tests, parent-teacher conferences, parent communications or other relevant material relating to a child's social, emotional or cognitive development in the classroom. These records are the property of the school and must be kept in the classroom.

#### **b. Specials Teachers**

Specials Teachers are responsible for keeping records on behavior and performance for all students. Students in K – Grade 4 are non-graded. Students in Grades 5 and 6 are given grades for Physical Education, Spanish, and Science but Art, Music, Library, Drama, Technology, and Religious Education are non-graded. In addition, Special Teachers must prepare comment sheets for each student Gr. 1-6 prior to the fall and spring Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences.

### **2. Digital Record Keeping**

St. Thomas's Day School monitors the growth and progress of students over time using a variety of methods. One of those methods is to retain digital records on each child in the school and on each class.

#### **a. Organization of the Record Keeping File**

- The digital records are located in a folder on the Google Drive called Record Keeping. That folder will be shared with Head Teachers by the Assistant Head of School at the beginning of each school year.
- In the Record Keeping folder, each grade has a file that is identified by the year the class graduates. For example, Class of 2025.

- In each class file, there are individual folders for each student, a class file and a file name Permanent Records.
- Each student folder has folders for each grade that the child attended St. Thomas's Day School.
- In each grade folder, there are Reading Records and Math Records to record all Curriculum Assessments that were done by the child throughout the year.

**b. Class Records**

In each grade's folder, there is a class file for the class. The class folder has a Class Directory and folders for every grade. Each grade folder includes the following information:

- Class Information
- Field Trips
- Guest Speakers
- Special Projects

Head Teachers are responsible for updating and maintaining each of these forms for their class every year. The Class Directory may be updated to match the current class each year.

**c. Permanent Records**

Each student enrolled at St. Thomas's Day School has a Permanent Record or cumulative record card. The permanent records are located in digital Record Keeping folder for each grade. They can be found in the file called "Permanent Records".

At the end of each year, teachers are responsible for completing the permanent records with cumulative information, including reading levels, strengths, weakness and hobbies. The permanent record is part of the permanent file and is sent along with report cards to other schools when students move on from St. Thomas's Day School.

**d. Maintaining Records**

Head teachers are required to maintain and keep the records updated throughout the school year. All curriculum test scores must be recorded on the digital records, along with areas of difficulty a student demonstrated on the tests. Teachers should not wait until the end of the year to enter data on the digital records, as they are used throughout the year to monitor growth over time and help and help to identify patterns in learning. The Assistant Head of School uses the records, in conjunction with other pieces of information, to hold parent conferences and monitor class progress.

### 3. File Boxes

The information contained in Class File Boxes is “evidence” of the progress made by each class as a whole and by each student throughout the school year. The Head Teacher for each grade level is responsible for maintaining the Class File Box. The materials collected and recorded document the activities and curriculum for the grade, as well as the academic and social/emotional development of each student. The information should be updated regularly and should form the basis for holding discussions at parent/teacher conferences, as well as writing report cards. Class File Boxes contain two different kinds of files:

#### a. Class Files

The Class File provides information about the history and progress of the entire class for each school year. The Head Teacher creates a new Class File every year, labeling it with the grade level and school year, and placing it in the front of the File Box behind the previous grade. The Class File should include the following information:

- **Class Directory:** All Head Teachers should create a document containing a class list with birthdays, parent names, contact information, and addresses.
- **Field Trips:** All Head Teachers should include a list of field trips, complete with a brief description of each trip, approximate dates or times of year the trip is usually taken, the purpose of the trip, and contact info for that trip.
- **Special Projects:** Head Teachers should create a list briefly describing all of the projects/plays that are unique to their grade.
- **Class Information:** All Head Teachers should create a document that provides notes and relevant information about the class (i.e. children struggling, children with special needs, allergies, class culture, etc.). The document should be filed in the class file of the File Box.
- **Instructional Groups:** All Head Teachers need to create a document that includes instructional groupings for Reading/ Language Arts and Math. The document should include information about the instructional level of each child (name of the text, grade level, and unit the child left off on, and math placement in the class). Teachers should identify children with specific learning needs and provide information about strategies/techniques that were helpful.

- **Parent/Guardian Conferences:** Each time a teacher conducts a special parent/guardian conference, he/she completes a Special Conference Report. The reports get filed in the Class File.
- **Standardized Test Scores:** All Head Teachers should print copies of the test results from each standardized test that was administered to the class during the year (BOEHM, Children's Progress, ERB, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test). The class results should be stored be filed in the Class File.

#### **b. Individual Student Files**

- **Math and Reading Records:** Head Teachers are responsible for recording test scores from all math and reading tests that were administered during the school year on the Math and Reading Records. Each record includes a list of scores, as well as the areas of difficulty that each student experienced. The records are used to guide instruction and identify areas of strength and weakness.
- **Beginning- of -Year Assessments:** All Head Teachers should administer Beginning-of-Year assessments to help measure student progress across the year. Results for each student are filed in Individual Student Folders.
  - Children's Progress (Grades K-2)
  - EnVision 2.0 Math Placement Test (Grades 1-5)
  - McGraw Hill Wonders Placement Test
  - Words Their Way Spelling Assessment
  - Unedited On Demand Writing Sample
- **Standardized Test Results:** All Head Teachers should print copies of the test results from each standardized test that was administered to the class during the year (BOEHM, Children's Progress, ERB, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test). The class results should be filed in the appropriate Individual Student Folders.
- **Individual Learning Accommodations:** Information regarding specific learning needs or accommodations (referrals, speech, psychological testing, tutoring, educational testing) should be filed in the appropriate Individual Student Folders.
- **Special Parent/Guardian Conferences:** Each time a teacher conducts a special parent/guardian conference, he/she should complete a Special Conference Report. The reports should be filed in the Class File.
- **End-of-Year Assessments:** All Head Teachers should administer End-of-Year assessments to help measure student progress across the year. Results for each student are filed in Individual Student Folders.
  - Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Grades 1-6)
  - Children's Progress (Grades K-2)

- EnVision 2.0 Math Cumulative Test that is appropriate (Grades 1-5)
- EnVision Math 2.0 End-of-Year Assessment (Grades 1-5)
- McGraw Hill Wonders Unit Test – whichever is appropriate to demonstrate where the child left off (Grades 1-5)
- Unedited On Demand Writing Sample

#### **4. Records Closet**

The Records Closet is located across from the Assistant Head's office on the third floor. It should remain locked at all times. Anyone who needs to access a file box or look at a permanent record must sign the key for the Records Closet out from the Administrative Assistant at the Front Desk. The staff member should then sign the record out using the Record Sign Out sheet located on the clipboard in the Records Closet. The key to the Records Closet must be signed back in once the staff member has finished using it.

##### **a. Permanent Records**

Each student enrolled at St. Thomas's Day School has a Permanent Record file. The files are located in the records closet opposite the Assistant Head's office. They are not to be removed from the file cabinets without filling out the "sign out" sheets. They include the child's application and annual progress reports, cumulative record card, and test record.

##### **b. Test Records**

Each student enrolled at St. Thomas's Day School has a Test Record that is kept in the child's permanent record file. The Test Record is a cumulative record of all standardized test scores a student has received while attending St. Thomas's Day School. The record is maintained by the Assistant Head of School and is sent to schools as part of the permanent record when a student leaves St. Thomas's Day School.

The permanent record files are located in the records closet opposite the Assistant Head's office. Files are not to be removed from the file cabinets without filling out the "sign out" sheets located on the clipboard in the Records Closet.

## **E. Homework**

Homework is part of the educational experience at St. Thomas's Day School and serves an important purpose in a child's school life. Not only is homework a means of reviewing and reinforcing lessons taught in school, but it gives children a measure of responsibility and independence scaled to their developmental level. In addition to helping students develop work and study habits that will be helpful throughout their education, homework provides parents/guardian with a window



into what is happening in their child's classroom and keeps them informed about their child's progress.

## **1. Organization**

Part of being responsible and independent involves being organized. Teachers should be mindful that organization is a taught skill that students will need help with it over time. As such, teachers should build organizational structure into their homework systems and teach students how to use the structure. Things to consider when setting up a homework system:

- How will the students know what to do for homework?
- Where will they keep papers, books, and materials needed for homework?
- How will homework be turned in?
- How will homework be checked and returned?
- Where will they keep papers and materials that will stay home?

## **2. Amount of Homework**

Since St. Thomas's Day School takes a developmental approach to homework, amounts will vary from grade to grade. Obviously, times will also vary from child to child depending on the child's ability, focus and organization. In general, children should spend a reasonable amount of time working and then stop, even if they are not finished with their homework. If a child is consistently having difficulty completing homework, the child's teacher should be contacted. Parents/guardians are not expected to have to teach their own children; homework should be a review.

Developmentally appropriate times for completing homework are:

1st Grade	10 minutes
2nd Grade	20 minutes
3rd Grade	30 minutes
4th Grade	40 minutes
5th Grade	50 minutes
6th Grade	1 hour

### **a. Lower School (Grades 1-3)**

Lower School students (Grades 1-3) are given monthly homework menus with specific homework activities in Language Arts and Mathematics that must be completed by the end of the month. The menus provide variety, allow for differentiation and address various learning styles. They also foster time management skills and allow students to make decisions about their own learning. In addition to completing items on the homework menus, all Lower School students are expected to read with a parent/guardian for designated amounts of time every night.

**b. Upper School (Grades 4-6)**

Upper School students (Grades 4-6) will receive daily assignments in Language Arts and/or Math, as well as assignments that are due after a specific amount of time. Occasionally, Upper School students will also get homework from specials teachers. In addition to completing those assignments, Upper School students are expected to read for designated amounts of time every night.

All Upper School students will be given a homework planner at the beginning of the school year to help them keep track of assignments and learn about organization. In addition, Upper School homework assignments will be posted in Google Classroom.

**3. Accountability**

Accountability is another part of being responsible. When students are assigned homework, they should be expected to complete that homework. Head Teachers should check or monitor homework in some way each day, holding students accountable for their work and finding another time for them to do it if it is not done. For repeated offenses, parents/guardians should be contacted and a plan should be created to help the child succeed.

**4. Homework Planners**

All Upper School students receive planners each year and are expected to use them. The planners are designed to foster organization, independence, and responsibility surrounding homework and assignments. At the beginning of each school year, Head Teachers should review how to use the planner and what the expectations are surrounding the planner. Teachers should also monitor use of the planners throughout the year.

**F. Parent/Guardian Communication**

**1. Class Newsletters**

Lower School Teachers are responsible for sending home a class newsletter each week informing parents/guardians about what is happening in the class. Upper School teachers are responsible for sending

home a class newsletter every other week. The newsletter should include information about curriculum, field trips, special events, guest speakers, school news, reminders etc. The Head of School and Assistant Head of School must receive an electronic copy of all newsletters and notices sent to parents/guardians.

## **2. Grade Level Meeting**

Each fall, St. Thomas's Day School holds a Grade Level Meeting for each grade. The meeting will be scheduled by the Head of School after consulting with the Head Teacher. During the meeting, the teacher will introduce him/herself to the parents/guardians and discuss the following:

- Philosophy of Education
- Classroom Routines
- Curriculum
- Homework Policy
- Field Trips

## **3. Friday Flyers**

Every Friday, or the last day of the school week, a Friday Flyer will be sent to the entire school community by e-mail. The Friday Flyer contains important notices of upcoming events, schedule changes, order forms, parent meetings, reminders, class trips, and other information.

## **4. Parent/Guardian Teacher Conferences**

### **a. Guidelines**

Parent/guardian teacher conferences are our most effective and complete way of reporting on a child's life at St. Thomas's. A conference gives parents/guardians a documentary view of their child's day-to-day activities and progress within the curriculum, as well as a sense of his/her responses, pleasures and difficulties. Head teachers conduct the conferences with input from other staff members involved in working with the child. Assistant teachers should be encouraged to attend the conference. A minimum of two conferences for each child are scheduled. These conferences are usually held in the fall and again in the spring.

Preparation for parent/guardian teacher conferences is essential. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Active listening and response enrich the adult's understanding of the child's life. Our response to a child can be heightened by hearing the parent talk about the child; we can often help a parent/guardian with difficulties because we bring a different perspective. A conference is held to help us

and to help parents/guardians see a new point of view and to gain skills in parenting/teaching.

- Written notes should be kept for every conference, whether it is scheduled or unscheduled. These notes should be filed in the teacher's file box for each child in order to keep an accurate record of recommendations and should be electronically sent to the Head of School and Assistant Head of School and placed in the student file.

#### **b. Difficult Conferences**

Some conferences are difficult. We may be puzzled by behavior we observe in the child or have information for parents/guardians about a child's behavior that may be difficult for a parent/guardian to hear and accept. The following procedures should be followed:

- Always open the conference with the positive work and development of the child. If there is a concern, carefully mention the concern and ask the parent/guardian if they have noticed. Get input from the parent/guardian so there is a feeling of cooperation in guiding the child, clarity in perception of what is taking place, real respect and acceptance of the child and considered action on your part to relieve a parent/guardian's concern and increase trust in your expertise.
- Ask for a third person to attend the conference. As a matter of course, the Head or Assistant Head will sit in on a new teacher's conferences. However, all of us need a third person from time to time, either to witness what is taking place or to provide a different perspective. It is entirely proper—and a good idea—to ask your assistant to be with you.
- By all means avoid "curbside conferences." The casual questions, "How's my child doing?" asked at dismissal, at a party or in front of the child CANNOT be answered in such a setting. Suggest that a meeting be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. This is entirely proper and not an avoidance. Instead, it shows that you have respect for a child and will not discuss his/her school life in an inappropriate or casual way.
- A conference is a wonderful opportunity to get to know more about a child and his/her parents/guardians—and for them to get to know you. Trust builds with knowledge and trust is a condition of our work with children.

#### **c. Helpful Hints**

- Prepare yourself before the conference. Outline the key points you want to discuss with each parent/guardian. Gather your materials, which includes examples of student work. Organize

your room so that a comfortable, quiet place is available for the conference.

- Be Flexible. Meet in a comfortable place at a mutually convenient time. Encourage them to begin the discussion.
- Be Positive. Welcome the parents/guardians. Thank them for coming to the conference. Talk about the child's strengths. Show you are interested in the child.
- Begin where the parents/guardians are. Help them feel relaxed and comfortable. Encourage them to talk. Find out what they like about their child, and what their concerns are. Think and talk developmentally.
- Ask leading questions. Facilitate conversation by asking questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Some leading questions might be: "What does she do when....?" "What does she say about....?" "What do you do when....?", etc.
- Listen. Do not interrupt to say what you would have done. Be attentive and nod to show that you are listening and are interested.
- Be a good observer. Notice both what the parent/guardian says and does not say. Be aware of bodily tension, hesitation, excitability, etc.
- Make comments thoughtfully. Speak simply and sincerely. Use your comments to reassure, to encourage, or to carefully direct parents/guardians to relevant matters.
- Make certain you avoid educational jargon. Examples: Your sibling is adjusting well to his peer group and achieving expectancy in skill subjects, but his growth in content areas is being impaired by his reluctance to get on with this developmental task.
- Don't avoid unpleasant facts merely because you wish to please. Be tactful, but honest. Remember that you may be wrong, the parents/guardians right. Consider carefully their point of view.
- Answer personal questions. Be frank, brief, and truthful. Then try to redirect the conversation back to the parent/guardian.
- End the conference with a summary. Repeat the key ideas discussed. Try to highlight both on strength and one "growth-needed" area.
- Good relationships take time. Working with parents/guardians is a process. It takes time to develop rapport and trust. Don't try to do everything in one meeting.

## **5. Contacting Teachers**

Whenever possible, parents/guardians should contact teachers via email. Email provides a written record of the interaction, allows the teacher to focus

on children in the moment, and provides the teacher with an opportunity to think about the question or content before responding. Teachers will respond to all emails within 24 hours during the work week.

#### **6. Parent/Guardian Communication Log**

Whenever a teacher holds a conference with a parent/guardian (via phone or in person), he/she should record information about the conference on the Parent/Guardian Communication Log (located on the Faculty Intranet), including the date, who was involved in the conversation, and the nature of the conversation.

### **G. Plays/ Rehearsals**

At St. Thomas's Day School, all grades put on a play or performance of some kind during the school year. The performances are age appropriate and promote innovation, creative expression, and problem solving while enhancing public speaking skills and building self esteem.

#### **1. Props**

Props, costumes, and scenery used in performances are typically simple and designed by the children or made from simple things found around home. Teachers are responsible for cleaning up all props and scenery after performances.

#### **2. Stage**

The stage is adjacent to the gym and the All Purpose Room and is used for plays and performances throughout the year. During play season, whichever grade has the next performance, has exclusive rights to the stage for practice and rehearsals. The stage will also be used by Drama classes when available. Since time is so limited between performances, once a class has completed a show, the stage must be cleared, cleaned, and prepared for the next group immediately.

#### **3. Scheduling Rehearsals**

Since the stage is adjacent to the gym, rehearsals can be challenging to schedule. The gym is free most mornings until 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. Keeping that in mind, teachers should work together to find appropriate times for rehearsals that minimize impact on regular class schedules. During play season, whichever grade has the next performance, has exclusive rights to the stage for practice and rehearsals.

### **H. Field Trips**

#### **1. Planning**

Teachers are responsible for organizing field trips for their class to supplement learning in the classroom. Field trips should reinforce or

contribute to the curriculum and should be meaningful, as well as educational. All field trips must be approved by the Head of School before they happen.

When planning field trips teachers should keep the following in mind:

- Talk to colleagues about field trip plans to avoid scheduling conflicts.
- Inform Sandra Rizzo, the school's Administrative Assistant, at least ten school days before the trip so she can put it in the staff calendar.
- Blanket permission from parents/guardians is included in the Enrollment Contract for all short trips
- When appropriate, leave a list with the Deanna Novella, the Administrative Assistant in the Front Office, indicating which car or bus each child is in and phone numbers where the drivers can be reached.
- All teachers must create a list of Field Trips for the year that will be filed in the Class File Box. The list should include the name of the field trip, where it is located, contact information, and bus information.
- All buses must be reserved through Joanne Maselli, the bookkeeper.
- All reservations and confirmations for student activity on trips should be forwarded to the Business Office.

## **2. Parent/Guardian Attendance**

Parents/guardians are always welcomed on class field trips and should be given notice of field trips well in advance for planning purposes. While parents/guardians are generally happy to support teachers on trips, teachers should identify specific chaperones to assist with the children. Parents/guardians should be given guidelines about expected behavior prior to the trip. When there are fees associated with the trip, parents/guardians are expected to pay for themselves.

## **3. Chaperones**

All field trips at St. Thomas's Day School must be chaperoned by at least two designated adults. Chaperones should be given guidelines from the teacher prior to the trip so that they know what is expected of them. During field trips, chaperones are expected to attend to the children, keeping safety at the forefront. Teachers should guide parent chaperones when necessary.

## **4. Transportation**

### **a. Bus Safety**

ALL teachers and bus drivers should adhere to the following guidelines when using a bus to transport children:

- Drive at posted speed limits and slower in inclement weather.
- Carry no more passengers than the bus's designated capacity.
- Keep all doors locked while under way.

- Maintain orderly conduct, while encouraging a pleasant journey.
- Insist on respect for you as the driver and for fellow students.
- Drop children off only at trip destination and on return at school.
- In case of mechanical difficulties, stay with the children at all times. Do not leave the children to seek assistance.
- Do not pick up hitch hikers.
- Report infractions and/or difficulties to the child's teacher or the Head of School. The trip should be an enjoyable for the driver and for the children

#### **b. Parent/Guardian Drivers**

When a parent drives children on a field trip the following rules need to be followed:

- All passengers must be in a seatbelt.
- Children 12 and under are not allowed to sit in the front seat.
- The driver's vehicle must be registered and insured.
- The driver will obey all speed limits and road signs, etc.
- Car seats must be used for underweight children.
- There will be no unscheduled stops. (e.g. McDonalds', Dunkin Donuts)
- There will be no smoking in the presence of the children.
- The driver must have a cell phone and the number must be given to the Head Teacher and the front office.
- The Head Teacher is responsible for all the children on the trip, including the child of the parent/guardian who is on the field trip.

### **5. Safety Procedures**

Student safety is of utmost importance when classes are on field trips. During field trips, teachers should adhere to the following expectations:

#### **a. Accounting for All Students**

Teachers should monitor their students at all times while on field trips to make sure nobody gets lost or goes missing. The following systems can help teachers keep track of students:

- **Number system:** Assign each student in the class a number. Periodically ask the students to call out their numbers in order to make sure they are all present.



- **Buddy System:** Assign each student in the class a buddy. During field trips, remind students that they are responsible for their buddies.

**b. Adult Supervision**

When traveling with a group of students, it can be very helpful to keep an adult at the front of the group and an adult at the back of the group. The adult in the front guides the group where they are going, while the adult in the back makes sure nobody gets left behind.

**c. Medication**

Whenever leaving St. Thomas's Day School with students, teachers must carry the medication needed for that group of children. The medication and matching orders must be packed up and carried by the teacher during the trip in case there is an emergency. All medications are kept in the cabinet in the Main Office by the Nurse's Station and are organized by grade. They must be returned immediately once the group returns to school from the trip.

**d. Crossing streets**

When crossing the street with a group of children, teachers should take every precaution possible to ensure the safety of the children. When possible, teachers should cross at lights with crosswalks. One teacher should lead the group while the other holds traffic and makes sure all students cross safely. Any extra adults should be encouraged to help block the road. The person in the front of the group should stop to wait for the rest of the group once he/she is across the road.

**e. Behavior on a bus**

Students at St. Thomas's Day School are expected to behave appropriately when riding a bus to and from a field trip. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- Students should remain seated at all times while the bus is moving.
- Students should use a quiet voice when speaking with nearby friends.
- Students should treat the bus driver with respect.
- Students should only open windows if given permission by the bus driver or by a teacher.

**f. Behavior in Museums and Public Places**

Students from St. Thomas's Day School are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior and respect at all times while visiting museums and other public places. They should use quiet voices, listen to their teachers and guides, and participate appropriately. Any student who

behaves inappropriately or demonstrates disrespect of any kind should be reported to the Head of School immediately upon return.

**g. Bathrooms**

To ensure the safety of our students, all children must be accompanied by an adult when leaving the group on a field trip to use the bathroom. Whenever possible, the teacher should ask a parent/guardian or chaperone to walk the student to the bathroom so that he/she can stay with the group. Children should not be allowed to walk around the museum unattended.

**h. Emergencies**

When traveling with a group of students on a field trip, teachers must carry a cell phone at all times. That cell phone number should be left with the Administrative Assistant in the Main Office prior to leaving for the trip. In the case of an emergency, teachers should attend to the medical needs of the group and then call the school as soon as possible.