

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Mary Sweet
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1215 N Stratford Lane
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Wichita State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 67206-1311

County Sedgwick

Telephone (316) 684-9201 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://stthomaswichita.com/school E-mail swarren@stthomaswichita.com

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mrs. Janet Eaton E-mail eatonj@CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Catholic Diocese of Wichita Tel. (316) 269-3950

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Zach Woodburn
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - Middle/Junior high schools
 - High schools
 - K-12 schools
 - TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	48	31	79
K	21	26	47
1	29	21	50
2	27	23	50
3	29	19	48
4	27	23	50
5	21	27	48
6	24	25	49
7	34	35	69
8	34	38	72
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	294	268	562

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 11 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 2%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	576
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Burmese, Spanish, Swahili, Vietnamese, Filipino, Luo

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 28

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %

16 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 22

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	34
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 16:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Prepare students to be a reflection of Jesus Christ through stewardship, a true sense of belonging, and academic excellence, in preparation for life eternal.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

The mission of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School is to “prepare students to be a reflection of Jesus Christ through stewardship, a true sense of belonging, and academic excellence, in preparation for life eternal.” This mission is the driving force behind all the decisions made at the school.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church provides a majority of the school’s funding. Thus the school is financed through stewardship and tithing. Because of this, there is no tuition charged to attend St. Thomas Aquinas or any school in the Diocese of Wichita. This emphasizes our mission of stewardship. The Church community not only supports the school financially, but also provides a true sense of belonging, allowing students to grow in their faith while receiving a valuable education.

The school is located in an urban area of Wichita, KS. The city’s population is around 391,000 and approximately 1,500 families are served by St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church. The school serves about 323 of these families. The majority of our families are considered middle to upper class and have two working parents. Approximately 71% of our students are Caucasian, 4% are African-American, 11% are Hispanic, and 14% are Asian.

In August 1959, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church opened its parish school under the direction of Rev. Patrick J. Hollaran, S.J. and the Sisters of Charity. The school initially served 317 students in grades kindergarten through eight. By 1964, a new north wing was added to the School and for the next 50 years, the parish and school continued to experience steady growth. Since then, new classrooms, a cafeteria/auditorium, a learning lab, and a gymnasium were built to accommodate increasing enrollment. Some classrooms have been remodeled, creating a sensory room and an atrium for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School encourages and challenges students to reach their full potential. High academics are encouraged through a balance of tradition and innovation. Reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and religion are taught daily in each classroom. Every classroom has an interactive whiteboard, allowing teachers to engage students through a variety of digital content. Each seventh and eighth grade student is provided with an individual laptop at school to allow for continued access for research and communication. Students are entering a digital world, but life-skills are just as important for them to be successful post-college.

Staff and administration believe that part of their work is to get the souls of students to Heaven. Students are given the opportunity to attend Mass twice per week and pray throughout the day. Catholic beliefs are weaved into daily curriculum. Students learn the importance of spending time in silence with God and serving others. Each grade level adopts a charitable cause and takes on various projects throughout the year to support that cause. This can include simple acts of prayer, food drives for the local food pantry, and diaper drives for groups that support new mothers. Eighth graders volunteer twice per week at a local senior living community. During those visits, students spend time playing games, visiting with residents, and even accompanying them to the grocery store.

At St. Thomas Aquinas, the best illustration of academic excellence is not through test scores, but through the eighth-grade culminating project. Each student selects a controversial topic that ranges from immigration to vaccinations to digital sports. The eighth-grade students spend their second semester researching their topics to analyze problems and solutions, and to find arguments both in support of and in opposition to the topic. Students synthesize their research findings into a written research paper. The culmination of the project is in the public presentation, when students present their topic, including their personal point of view as well as that of the Catholic Church, along with an art project, to a panel of staff and community members. This project is a large part of the students’ final grades and a true reflection of their time here at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School.

St. Thomas Aquinas has a Community Family initiative that assists us in building school community and helps students develop a true sense of belonging. Through this program, students in kindergarten through

fourth grade are paired with students in fifth through eighth grade. Each buddy pair is assigned to a family which, led by two staff members, meets monthly over the lunch hour. Families stay consistent throughout the entire school year. Students have lunch and recess with their buddies and activities are planned to help build community. These activities could be as simple as board games or service projects for the Church. Older students are taught the importance of being role models, and younger students gain the confidence that comes with belonging.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

St. Thomas Aquinas’s core curriculum is guided by its mission to prepare students to be a reflection of Jesus Christ through stewardship, true sense of belonging, and academic excellence. The mission statement is the driving force behind each decision. The Diocesan standards draw from the Kansas State College and Career Readiness Standards and The Next Generation Science Standards. The curriculum at St. Thomas Aquinas is selected by a team of teachers. Math and English Language Arts curriculum is reviewed by a Diocesan committee of teachers. Using the mission and standards, teachers select the best curriculum to adopt.

The curriculum and materials have been carefully selected to encompass a wide range of activities and hands-on learning experiences. All teachers design units using a KUD (Know, Understand, Do) format that includes an essential question, standards to be taught, differentiated instruction, and religious infusion. At St. Thomas Aquinas, instruction is tailored to meet the needs of each student. Teachers use a variety of assessments to drive instruction and determine appropriate support for students. The NWEA MAP assessments, Kansas Assessment Program, DIBELS, classroom observations, and classroom work are all examined and used to make decisions regarding a child’s progress.

Many classes incorporate blended learning, in which traditional face-to-face instruction is supplemented by digital activities. Students in seventh and eighth grades each receive a personal laptop to use at school. Computer carts, a computer lab, and iPads are available for teachers. These devices allow teachers to access and manipulate electronic files to enhance their teaching techniques and engage the learners. Teachers consistently work to find the correct balance between traditional bookwork and computer work.

Project-based learning is a priority at St. Thomas Aquinas. Teachers receive frequent training on ways to incorporate project-based learning into each subject. The last area of focus is incorporating the Catholic faith throughout the learning experience. As a Catholic school, the mission is to make each student a reflection of Jesus Christ, and this is accomplished by making faith a priority throughout the day.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Reading/English Language Arts curriculum emphasizes standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. English Language Arts is taught in kindergarten through fifth grades using a combination of Journeys, novel studies, and Houghton Mifflin English. Instruction focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, text-based comprehension, grammar, and writing. Students at the middle school level use Prentice Hall Literature, Scope magazine, and novel studies in literature class. These curriculums are focused on developing skills in comprehension and critical thinking and allow students to draw conclusions about the readings. An honors literature class is offered for seventh and eighth graders. Students are selected to be in honors classes based on a matrix of scores including semester grades, NWEA MAP results, and state assessment scores. English class is taught using the Voyages curriculum, hands-on writing activity, and various research projects. The combination of the two classes prepares students for high school and beyond.

Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to help reach each student, including interactive notebooks, Socratic seminars, and total participation techniques. Lessons are differentiated to engage learners of all levels and to engage various learning styles.

Kindergarten, first, and second grade students take the DIBELS assessment which tests their letter naming, phonemic awareness, phonics, and oral reading fluency. Students who do not meet the required benchmarks are progress-monitored, either weekly or bi-weekly, to ensure interventions are helping the student progress. At St. Thomas Aquinas, early interventions and progress monitoring are essential to ensure students are set up for success in the later grades.

Kindergarten students are tested at the beginning of the year on basic reading skills using DIBELS. Based on their performance, students come home daily with either letter recognition lists, sight word lists, or books. Students practice these at home with a parent who then signs off when a child is ready to test and move on at school. The teacher will test the child and move them to the next list that is sent home and the process is repeated. This allows parents to have a vital role in laying the foundation for their child's reading and progress.

Students at St. Thomas Aquinas take the NWEA MAP assessments in reading and language beginning in kindergarten and through seventh grade. Kindergarten and first grade students take the reading assessments three times per year to ensure students are actively making progress and allow us the opportunity to implement interventions as early as possible. All students in second through seventh grade take the reading and language tests at least twice per year in the fall and spring. Teachers analyze results during in-service days to ensure appropriate interventions and accommodations are put in place. Any student who falls below the 40th percentile is considered at-risk and the data is broken down to see what standards the student needs the most assistance with. Students considered at-risk are tested three times per year to ensure adequate progress is being made. Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) program uses this data to determine small groups for tier time.

1c. Mathematics

The math curriculum is a sequence of topics and performances that are organized to meet state standards. Students must have an understanding of concepts and master procedural skills. Teachers spend time focusing not just on fact fluency but also on various ways students can solve problems. Math is taught in kindergarten through eighth grade using the Envision curriculum. Moby Max (K-5) and ALEKS (6-8) are also used as technological tools to support the math curriculum. These web-based programs are adaptive and provide differentiated instructional support for students. Manipulatives, smartboard games, online practice activities, and tests assist in presenting each topic in a unique way that engages all students. Number talks are used throughout the building so students are able to explain their thinking and learn from each other. Teachers consistently look for ways to make lessons meaningful and practical for students. For instance, when learning decimals and percentages, students in the sixth grade setup a store where they learn how to calculate sales tax, overall earnings, and the amount to be tithed to the church. Students in fifth grade connect measurement to faith by stacking cereal boxes to the ceiling of the classroom and converting the measurements. Afterward, the cereal boxes are all donated to a local food pantry. Students in first grade create addition and subtraction flashcards to aid in fact fluency. Students are assessed through addition/subtraction facts tests.

Project Lead the Way, math support, and math exploratory courses are offered to middle school students. Advanced or honors math is offered beginning in fourth grade. Students are placed into advanced/honors math based on a matrix of semester grades, NWEA MAP scores, and state assessment scores. Students who score exceptionally high (95th percentile or higher on NWEA MAP) or have an IEP for gifted services may qualify to advance to the next grade level for math instruction. Students take the NWEA MAP assessments in math from kindergarten through seventh grade. The system used in reading and language arts is also applied for math. Math data is also used to identify students who need additional support during tier time or an intervention exploratory course.

1d. Science

Science curriculum focuses on physical sciences, life sciences, earth and space, and engineering. Students learn the scientific method to conduct real-life, problem-based experiments. The majority of experiments are hands-on. Kindergarten through fifth grade use the Nancy Larson Science curriculum which was chosen based on its high academic vocabulary and hands-on learning. Middle school students are also able to take multiple options of both Project Lead the Way courses and Science Olympiad as exploratory courses. The Science Olympiad group works together to form a team that participates at various events. Available for all grade levels, a gardening exploratory class maintains the St. Isidore Garden. The St. Isidore Garden consists of nine garden beds in which organic vegetables and herbs are grown to be used in the school cafeteria or sold after school in a mini farmer's market. The garden provides multiple opportunities for teaching students

about ecosystems, healthy eating, weather, and supply and demand.

Assessments in science are mainly conducted through project-based learning. Third grade students began a recycling initiative in their classroom that eventually spread to the entire school. Students in fifth grade participate in a program called Starbase. This STEM program is taught by instructors affiliated with the Kansas Air National Guard and focuses instruction on aeronautics and flight. Students in sixth grade must show an understanding of heredity and biotechnology by conducting a thought experiment in which they create designer babies and address the ethical implications of the ability to be able to do so. Students in the eighth grade must show an understanding of thermal temperatures and physical and chemical changes by making chocolate fudge. Students in fifth and eighth grades are tested in science through the Kansas Assessment Program. Eighth grade students also take a science exam using ACT Aspire. The results of the assessments are used to help drive any needed changes in instruction to ensure all standards are being covered.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Social Studies curriculum addresses standards from the state and ensures students are college and career ready through project-based and cross-curricular learning. The curriculum begins with a sense of self and families, allows students to compare and contrast the past and present, delivers an understanding of the state of Kansas and its history, and moves into world and US history and geography. Teachers weave informational text standards throughout their social studies lessons. Middle school students are taught to take Cornell notes and answer document-based questions. This requires students to analyze past and current documents and come to their own conclusions given the information at hand. Students in the eighth grade analyze a Supreme Court case and a related amendment. The students write a research paper on the case and its present-day legal ramifications.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

St. Thomas Aquinas offers both three- and four-year old preschool. Three-year old students attend either two or three mornings per week. Four-year old students may either attend five mornings per week or all-day preschool. The curriculum develops literacy skills, math concepts and reasoning, cognitive development, social skills, fine motor skills and Catholic faith formation. Through small group activities, independent play, and whole group instruction, students learn the skills necessary to enter kindergarten. Teachers develop units using a KUD format that include language arts, math, science, social studies, and religion. Preschool standards are aligned with the Kansas College and Career Readiness standards. Teachers collaborate to create cross-curricular materials that address the standards and meet the needs of individual students. Small groups are used in the classroom to differentiate instruction and reach each student at his/her individual level. Handwriting without Tears is used to teach handwriting.

Students are assessed individually on a checklist of skills to ensure kindergarten readiness. These skills include letter and number recognition and identification, rote counting, patterns, prayers, and ability to solve problems independently. Teachers fill out a detailed progress report on each student four times per year. The report allows parents to see the growth a child has made over the course of the year. Teachers also use the progress reports to determine small group participation during center time and the skill gaps to be addressed throughout the year. Lesson plans are fluid and constantly adjusted to meet the needs of the students. If a student is struggling to make progress, interventions are put in place to ensure the child's success. Speech services are provided in house by the local public school for students with a speech IEP. Kindergarten data in both NWEA MAP and DIBELS shows St. Thomas Aquinas preschool students perform above same-age preschool peers.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art taught by a certified art teacher is offered to students in preschool through fifth grade once per week for forty minutes. Kindergarten and first grade students work on hand-eye coordination, letter literacy, primary

colors, and elements of art. Second and third grade students move into composition, principles of design, symmetry, and art critique. Fourth and fifth grade students learn about portraiture, landscapes, positive and negative space, and using clay. Seventh grade students are required to take art as one of their exploratory classes. Art is also offered as an exploratory for sixth and eighth graders. Middle school students work on art critique and movement. They also learn art history and how to tell a story through creative decisions in artwork.

Music is offered at least twice per week for students in preschool through fifth grade for thirty minutes per session. Students experience music through creating, performing and responding. The skills incorporated are singing, playing instruments, listening to different styles of music, composition and music history. Students in preschool through fifth grade each have one performance concert per school year. Music is a required exploratory for sixth grade students. Choir, musical, showstoppers, and an introduction to theatre are also offered in middle school.

Physical Education is taught to students in grades preschool through fifth grade at least two times per week for thirty minutes each class. It is a required exploratory for seventh grade students. The physical education and health curriculum aim to have total participation of all students in team cooperation, interaction, communication, and skill building. The curriculum helps to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to enjoy a physically active, healthy lifestyle. Sports Exploration is offered to students in middle school.

Spanish is a core class for our eighth-grade students and exploratory option for seventh graders. Students develop the skill sets needed for communication in an ever-changing universal society. Strengthening their understanding of the structures of language, culture and geography, students are exposed to the target language. Students demonstrate verbal and written skills associated with grammar, vocabulary, present-tense verbs, idioms, and school-related Catholic themes. This class not only prepares students for Spanish courses in high school, but also gives students the ability to have conversations in more than one language and broadens their horizons.

Computer class is taught to students in kindergarten and first grade once per week for thirty minutes, while the second through fifth grades attend twice per week for thirty minutes each class. The curriculum follows the Diocese and state of Kansas model for Computer Science Standards. Essential skills taught include problem solving, coding, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and keyboarding. Computer Technology skills is a required exploratory for sixth graders, with Introduction to Computer Applications is required for seventh grade students.

St. Thomas Aquinas Library Media Center's mission is to actively promote reading and provide equitable access to literary and informational texts in a variety of subjects, genres, and formats. The Media Center promotes individual and group learning, helps in developing students' vocabulary, enhances comprehension, and develops the habit of silent reading. Pre-K through fifth graders come once a week for instruction. Middle schoolers come to the library as needed for books and research. Third through fifth graders, participate in the research process. Students begin by reading information from text, and then continue by exploring appropriate websites to complete their investigation. Students apply critical thinking skills to draw conclusions and construct new understandings.

As a Catholic school, the most important part of the mission is preparing students to be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Religion is not just a course taught at St. Thomas Aquinas. It is a way of life. Religion is taught as a stand-alone course in all grade levels. The curriculum is established by the Diocese of Wichita and is taught using Blest Are We curriculum. Students in preschool through second grade also receive instruction through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. This program allows students to learn about their faith in a Montessori-type setting.

Exploratory courses are offered to middle school students. Sixth and seventh grade students have two exploratory courses each quarter, for a total of eight per year. Eighth grade students have one course each quarter, for a total of four per year. Various courses are required at the sixth and seventh grade levels. Due to the limited number of courses available for eighth grade, there are no required exploratories at this level.

The purpose of the exploratory courses is to give students a change of pace from the school day and the

opportunity to explore individual interests and serve individual needs. Exploratory courses are offered in the areas of fine arts, life skills, physical education, science applications, math, social skills, and technology.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

At St. Thomas Aquinas, instruction is tailored to meet the needs of each student. Teachers use a variety of assessments to drive instruction and determine appropriate supports for students. The NWEA MAP assessments, Kansas Assessment Program, DIBELS, classroom observations, and classroom work are all examined and used to make decisions regarding a child's progress.

There are a variety of ways students below grade level are supported. All students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in MTSS tier time for thirty minutes Monday through Thursday. Data is used to determine the breakdown of each tier and groups remain fluid throughout the year. Students performing below grade level receive small group instruction during this time to help fill any gaps in their learning. A tier three intervention is Alphabetic Phonics. In middle school, reading and math intervention courses are available to students as exploratory courses. Students who receive a score of one on the Kansas State Assessment, fail a core subject in a semester, or are recommended by a teacher, are enrolled in an intervention course. These courses are limited to ten students and are taught by the middle school math and English Language Arts teachers. This small class size allows the teacher to develop a relationship with the student and identify the exact needs of the student.

St. Thomas Aquinas has a Learning Lab available to students. Students are able to take tests, receive read aloud accommodations, or work quietly in the Learning Lab. A staff member is in the learning lab to work with students and provide necessary support. For students who receive a score of one on the Kansas State Assessments, thirty hours of summer school are required. The goal is to help prevent the summer gap from occurring with these students and to provide one-on-one instruction.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Special accommodations are also offered to students who perform above grade. Tier time for kindergarten through fifth grades includes small groups who work with a teacher on challenging materials and advanced topics. In-depth novel studies and hands-on learning are used in reading tiers. For example, when students studied owls, they were able to dissect owl pellets and rebuild the skeleton of the ingested rodent. Writing tiers have students create their own poetry books and host a poetry event. Each student has a quote journal with inspirational and motivational quotes. Students interpret the meaning of quotes and how to apply them to their own lives. At the middle school level, students are able to take honors literature in seventh and eighth grades. Beginning in fourth grade, core math classes are leveled to allow for greater rigor and challenge for students that need it. Some students are also able to advance one grade higher in math based on test data and classroom performance. Students attend math class with the next grade level and teachers work with the special needs coordinator to make the schedule work. Honors math is available for students in sixth through eighth grades. Students are selected to be in honors programs based on a matrix that includes scores on Kansas State Assessments, NWEA MAP, and classroom grades. In the eighth grade, students take Introduction to Algebra, Algebra, Honors Algebra, or Geometry. The students who take Geometry attend the class at Kapaun-Mt. Carmel High School with sophomores.

3c. Special education

A special needs coordinator is a full-time special education teacher who works with small groups and individual students. The teacher is in charge of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students performing above and below grade level. The ILPs list the reasons why a student needs support and specifies various accommodations aimed at meeting the student's needs. ILPs are reviewed with teachers and parents twice per year at conferences. The coordinator also works closely with the local public school district to help serve students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

St. Thomas Aquinas has formed a partnership with the local public schools to help provide special education to students with special needs. The students spend part of their day at the public school receiving special education services in reading, math, or both subjects, but attend St. Thomas Aquinas for the rest of their day. This is a win-win for students who often times need additional services including speech, occupational therapy, and counseling due to their IEPs. When students with IEPs are at St. Thomas, the same accommodations are provided and teachers work on their IEP goals with them. The students are able to enjoy being in the general education setting with support of paraprofessionals or special needs staff.

To support students with Down Syndrome, St. Thomas Aquinas established the St. Bellarmine program. The St. Bellarmine Initiative has allowed St. Thomas to work with the local public schools, offering highly specialized and off-campus learning opportunities while actively working to include the student in the St. Thomas community. Currently, one student with Down Syndrome attends half of his day at St. Thomas. A paraprofessional ensures he receives the support he needs with appropriate curriculum to parallel his peers.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

St. Thomas Aquinas recognizes that student engagement is directly related to academic success. Students are engaged in a variety of ways to ensure all are motivated and provided with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth.

Students' academic growth is supported through MTSS program, differentiated instruction, project based learning, National Junior Honor Society, honors and exploratory courses, and opportunities for competition. The MTSS program ensures students in kindergarten through fifth grade receive thirty minutes of tier instruction at their individual levels every day, Monday through Thursday. Teachers use differentiated instruction and project -based learning across the curriculum to ensure students are engaged in meaningful and relevant learning. The National Junior Honor Society is a select group of seventh and eighth graders who have applied and are accepted based on grade point average, leadership capabilities, and classroom performance. Honors and advanced courses are offered in math starting in fourth grade and in literature beginning in seventh grade. In middle school, exploratory courses are offered allowing students some choice in their schedule. Currently, over 40 exploratory courses ranging from fine arts to athletics to study skills are offered. There are also varieties of ways for students to compete academically. Teams include scholar's bowl, religion bowl, battle of the books, geography bee, spelling bee, and a mental math bee. The majority of teams are open to students in middle school but some teams and bees include fifth grade as well.

A Student Assistance Team (SAT) composed of the principal, assistant principal, special education coordinator, assistant special education coordinator, and the counselor meets once per week to discuss concerns regarding individual students. They brainstorm and implement various supports and strategies to help the student succeed and work with the classroom teacher to ensure each child's success.

St. Thomas Aquinas supports students in their social and emotional growth through Community Family, social support groups, counselor classroom visits, Virtue-Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD), and athletics. Community Family Days occur six times per year and allow students to build relationships with other students. The school counselor works with students who are struggling socially. The school counselor also visits classrooms and teaches lessons regarding social and emotional health. VBRD supports students' social and emotional health by having class meetings, adopting monthly virtues, and teaching students conflict resolution. When students misbehave, VBRD teaches them to repair the harm caused through natural consequences and restorative acts. Students are also able to compete in athletics beginning in middle school, including volleyball, football, basketball, track, and cross-country.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

St. Thomas Aquinas school is dependent upon families and the parish community. Parents participate in leadership roles on the Parish School Council, Parent Teacher Organization, and Athletic Council. These three organizations help to make impactful decisions for the school. The Parish School Council oversees the school and helps to provide feedback on any changes. The Parent Teacher Organization helps provide teacher recognition, supplies and equipment for the school, and has a yearly classroom grant program through which teachers can request additional supplies or equipment for their classrooms. The Athletic Council oversees the Athletic Department and the Athletic Director.

A unique committee at St. Thomas Aquinas is the Crisis Team. This team consists of the Assistant Principal, Nurse, Head of Maintenance, and parents who are professional first responders. This team determines the crisis procedures in the event of a fire, tornado, lock out, armed intruder, etc. The parents on this committee are police officers, FBI agents, firefighters, and crisis planners. The committee attends some of the drills at school and provides feedback on ways to make the school a safer place.

Parents can expand upon their own learning through Parish University. Parents are required to attend two Parish University presentations per year. These events have included six-week courses on Love and Logic as

well as single evening guest speakers who focus on social media, health concerns, and special needs. The sessions vary depending on requests and needs of parents.

Each grade level adopts one cause as a stewardship or service project each year. These partnerships allow students to serve the Wichita community outside of the parish. One of the most exciting events is the Cultural Festival, held every other year. The Cultural Festival is the kick-off event for Catholic Schools Week and serves as an open house for the school. Families in the parish and surrounding community are invited to attend the event in order to showcase their culture. The event includes traditional Mexican dancers, a Vietnamese dragon, and a cafeteria full of international foods provided by families and volunteers.

The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church's Mission Outreach organization provides for those in our community who are disadvantaged, suffering, or in-need. Through monetary gifts made by parishioners, Mission Outreach grants approximately \$35,000 to low-income schools of the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. The schools use the grants to purchase items such as textbooks or to fund academic initiatives. In addition, Mission Outreach hosts an annual School Supplies Drive and a Coat & Blanket Drive each year. Parishioners make in-kind donations to these efforts and volunteer their time to the organization and execution of the initiatives. Students who attend low-income schools of the Diocese benefit from both these drives.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

St. Thomas Aquinas recognizes that the teachers are the school's most valued assets and strives to provide them with the support they need to flourish. Teachers in preschool through fifth grade have common team planning time every week. This time allows for collaboration in lesson planning and developing plans for individual students. Middle school teachers have weekly Teacher Advisor (TA) meetings after school. In these meetings, concerns regarding individual students are discussed so the teachers can work as a team to support each student and ensure one teacher is communicating concerns with the parents.

Professional development is provided to teachers both inside and outside of the building. Teachers have one pre-approved day per year to use for professional learning related to their discipline. All teachers partake in crisis training and suicide prevention training each year. Recently, efforts have focused on project-based learning and all teachers have received training in this area. Teachers establish professional goals at the beginning of each year and they are grouped together based on similar goals. Teachers in each group then select a book and conduct monthly book study meetings. These meetings are completely teacher-driven, and the members share ideas and problem solve with each other.

The most important way to show teachers they are valued is through open communication. Weekly emails are sent showing the teachers the schedule for the upcoming week and a few notes of things to keep in mind. Teachers are surveyed regarding conferences, intruder and crisis drills, and changes to the school. Teachers also fill out an evaluation on both the principal and the assistant principal. The evaluations are completely anonymous, so teachers feel comfortable being honest in their feedback. These evaluations are used to guide the administrators' goals for the following school year.

First- and second-year teachers at St. Thomas Aquinas are supported through a mentor program. Each of these teachers is assigned a mentor to work with them. The mentor teacher provides the valuable knowledge of an experienced educator but also offers additional support and guidance for those new to the profession.

4. School Leadership:

While developing and nurturing the partnership between the parish, the students' families, and the school, the administration of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School is responsible for promoting student performance and securing overall school effectiveness. Administration does this by ensuring equity of learning opportunities and supporting innovation. The administrative team includes the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Principal, and Assistant Principal. The principal is accountable to the Pastor and all decisions are approved by him. The Principal and Assistant Principal oversee teacher evaluation, personnel, curriculum, budget,

discipline, professional development, data, special education services, and extra-curricular activities such as fine arts, athletics, and academics. The Principal and Assistant Principal work under the guidance of the Catholic School Office. This includes the Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent.

The Building Leadership Team is composed of teachers representing every grade level, a fine arts representative, the special needs coordinator, and the administration. This team provides feedback to the administration regarding changes that have been made or those that need to be addressed. The principal sets the monthly agenda, but other participants can add additional topics. Members of this team take the information discussed in the meetings and communicate it to their peers.

Recently, the state of Kansas has changed its accreditation model to the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA). Due to this change, administration thought it would be valuable to establish a KESA team solely in charge of overseeing accreditation implementation at the school. Two teachers, one elementary and one middle school, oversee the KESA team with the principal. The Building Level Team (BLT) consists of teacher and Parish School Council members. This team ensures that the entire staff and community are aware of the requirements for accreditation and ensure compliance.

The Parish School Council acts in an advisory capacity to the Pastor and Principal on all aspects of the parish school program. They share in the development, implementation, and protection of the vision of Catholic education. Lay members of the Parish School Council are appointed by the Principal and each serves a three-year term, from July 1 to the following June 30. Ex-officio members of the Council include school administrators, a representative of the PTO, and members of the parish staff.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In reflecting on what makes St. Thomas Aquinas successful, it is important to examine which practice has had the largest impact. After speaking to many stakeholders, the same answer continuously comes up: the community. The Diocese of Wichita is a special place. It is the only Diocese in the country that is completely dependent upon parish members. Students in the Catholic Diocese of Wichita attend Catholic schools at no cost, as no tuition is charged. This is only possible because of the sacrifices of church parish members through tithing and stewardship. Students learn the meaning of stewardship and the significant impact it has on their education. With this knowledge, students strive to make the Church and its members proud.

Community in the school is built in a number of ways including Community Family days, collaborative team time for teachers, Virtue Based Restorative Discipline, and classroom circles. The goal is for students to have a true sense of belonging at St. Thomas Aquinas and for the school to support their social and emotional health. It is a part of the mission statement because it is imperative to a child's success. The staff feels a responsibility to each student and the staff works as a team to make sure no child is forgotten.

Families are also a huge part of the community. Parents serve on Parish School Council, Athletics Council, Parent Teacher Organization, and the Crisis team. Students see parents in the lunchroom volunteering every day to help open milk and clean up after each grade level. Parents can also be seen in the classrooms, tutoring and assisting teachers when possible.

Faith is the most important way community is built. Each week starts with all school Mass. Each student and staff member spends time in prayer as a school community, as every day begins and ends with prayer. Students celebrate with each other when milestones such as First Communion are reached. School-wide events begin and end in prayer. The students are united and connected to each other simply because of their beliefs. Faith is what truly unites the school and drives the staff to make each of these students a true reflection of Jesus Christ.

PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Non-public school association(s): Catholic

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes X No
3. What is the educational cost per student? \$5059
(School budget divided by enrollment)
4. What is the average financial aid per student? \$0
5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 0%
6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 0%