

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

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[ ] Public or [X] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Saint Theresa Catholic School - Sugar Land  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 705 Street Theresa Boulevard  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Sugar Land State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77498-0400

County Fort Bend

Telephone (281) 494-1157 Fax (281) 240-4870

Web site/URL https://sttheresacatholicschool.org E-mail bpruski@sttheresacatholicschool.org

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\* Ms. Debra Haney E-mail dhaney@archgh.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Tel. (713) 714-8704

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 Deacon John Kennedy  
(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**

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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

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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	17	23	40
K	10	19	29
1	16	10	26
2	10	8	18
3	9	16	25
4	13	12	25
5	11	13	24
6	6	11	17
7	2	14	16
8	8	11	19
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	102	137	239

\*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
  - 23 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 30 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 31 % White
  - 7 % 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: 4%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	7
(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	240
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %  
0 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	96%	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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

Saint Theresa Catholic School's mission is to furnish students with an outstanding Classical education informed by the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition.

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**

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Saint Theresa Catholic School (STCS) is a classical educational institution in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston serving Pre-K3 through 8th Grade students. Established in 2008 to serve the needs of parents and students seeking both a rigorous academic preparation and authentic spiritual formation, this parochial school continues its commitment to furnishing students with an education that combines the wisdom of the classics with a firm foundation in faith and morals. STCS, located in Sugar Land, Texas, offers students a challenging liberal arts curriculum that includes formal instruction in Latin starting in Grade 1; classes in traditional liturgical chorus three days a week; and lessons in Art and Art History twice a week. With one class section per grade, parents find the intimate educational atmosphere of STCS very attractive, saying that they feel the school community is one large family of teaching and learning. The mission of STCS is to “form students who have a genuine love of God and the Church and who are prudent, compassionate, kind, courageous, and generous in their service of one another and to others.”

Reflective of the cultural diversity of the Houston metropolitan area, this suburban school traditionally has roughly even percentages of Hispanic, Caucasian, and Asian students, with a significant representation of Filipino, Nigerian, Vietnamese, and Eastern European children, among its current 239 pupils. STCS is a community of diversity in unity: the Catholic faith provides a common bond in celebration of individual identities. Living Rosary devotions each spring, for example, feature students offering prayers in French, Russian, Vietnamese, Polish, Tagalog, Spanish, Latin, Chinese, and English. While many STCS students speak languages other than English at home, all are learning Latin together, thus ensuring that the Catholic faith and the curricular focus on classical languages provide common touchpoints for all students.

The success of these students results from the ordered and deliberate pursuit of a single Ciceronian principle: *esse quam videri*—to be, rather than to seem. The ideals of integrity and integration—seeking the whole in quest of truth—permeates the school culture, programs, and structures. At the individual level, students are challenged to take responsibility for their choices through the innovative Future U initiative. Building on the pioneering work of Viktor Frankl in Logotherapy, students are reminded that, although they may not be able to choose their circumstances, they certainly choose their own actions. The Future U framework is a growth mindset concept that shapes discussions with students in topics as varied as discipline, student government deliberations, and academic achievement. Faculty and staff, in classroom settings and beyond, urge students to think about where they want to be in 3 months, 6 months, and a year from now. Students are then invited regularly to ask themselves if their current choices are aligned with their goals for their future selves. They are frequently reminded that “present you is the best steward of Future U,” and are asked to develop a written plan to help them become that future best self. This model develops the executive functioning skills of students to a remarkable degree, fostering their socio-emotional and academic growth.

At the community level, students are urged to consider the idea of integration and integrity from the standpoint of seeking the true, common good for the class and the entire school. They are challenged by faculty and staff to ponder what kinds of choices will help all to flourish together. These character growth initiatives are cultivated through the PACE guidance curriculum, a virtue of the month program, annual spiritual retreats, literature circles, the academic House system in middle school, and essays that students must complete as a part of reflection time if they have made consistently poor choices.

At the curricular level, pursuit of integration and integrity takes the form of the school’s Wisdom and Wonder approach to teaching and learning. This means that educational aims are intentionally characterized by an effort to have each subject presented in its full, living context, rather than being reduced to the mastery of mere data or information removed from its original setting. For example, when most middle school students begin to explore the life of insects, they are often presented with the specimen of a dead cricket to study. Every child knows, however, that live crickets chirp, leap, and eat. At STCS, students work together in teams to build insect habitats to sustain at least three generations of crickets, discovering far more about these insects than the features of an exoskeleton. Instead, students learn about an array of information that defines the essence of crickets, as they contemplate optimal food, light, life cycle, moisture levels, temperature, noise levels, space requirements, and surfacing in habitat designs.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

Consistent with the Wisdom and Wonder approach to teaching and learning at STCS, core subjects are integrated and mutually reinforcing. For example, instructors organize literature selections to complement the sequential teaching of History. In Grades 4-8, students trace the history of civilization from the dawn of time through the early 21st Century while reading literature of each era to make that period come alive. Grade 5 students explore the Greek and Roman Empires while reading Rosemary Sutcliffe's *Eagle of the Ninth*, a novel that traces the wanderings of a fictional legionary in Roman Britain. Students in Grade 8 study the Civil Rights movement in mid-20th Century America while reading Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In each case, characters living in a certain era give students a fuller realization of what life was like at that time. This structure encourages students to glean multiple, coordinated insights into concepts, movements, and principles that a disaggregated approach does not yield.

In keeping with a classical curriculum, instruction in core classes combines a mimetic method with a Socratic approach to engaging students. In mimetic learning, students move “from the known to the unknown,” as new concepts are introduced through close comparison with more familiar objects or ideas. The Socratic conventions of question-and-answer, analogy, debate, and defense of viewpoint ensure that students are always active learners in building their store of knowledge and in forming their character. Assessment involves not only summative exercises through quizzes and tests, but also formative experiences, such as informal classroom debates that challenge students in their understanding of fundamental concepts.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

The classical Trivium calls for students to master Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric as discrete subjects in the curriculum, in order to comprehend well, think clearly, and communicate effectively; this furnishes the STCS framework for teaching English Language Arts. Grammar is the logic of language, and there is a rudimentary form of grammar in both musical syntax and the sound system of languages. For that reason, beginning in kindergarten, STCS children memorize the 71 phonograms in the English language. First and second graders use their knowledge of phonograms to spell and read. Through direct spelling instruction with a special mnemonic marking system, first and second graders become proficient in decoding and encoding words.

Decoding and encoding words is the implicit gateway to the explicit study of Grammar starting in Grade 1, when students begin to diagram sentences. Children learn to identify words according to part of speech and then, within the structure of a sentence, to identify the syntax. By Grade 7, they are able to parse each word of a basic English sentence whether it be simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. The consistent practice of grammar lays an important foundation for the formal study of Latin. Students engage in Latin sentence analysis with a confidence borne of years of focused English language study.

Through the study of Grammar in English and Latin, students are being prepared to take up the formal study of Logic, in an elementary way, in Grade 4. In Grades 4-6, students are gradually introduced to fundamental concepts in Logic related to defined terms and propositional debate. These skills are deepened and strengthened each year, so that by Grades 7 and 8, students have a firm grasp of formal and informal fallacies, the limits of analogy in argument, and which facts are pertinent to a given topic of conversation or for a particular audience. By mastering the science and art of reasoning well, students become confident in their ability to communicate their ideas to an audience.

Students begin to master Rhetoric in a deliberate way through frequent composition exercises in a stand-alone course. In addition to short-essay responses to literature or some historical event, they compete in a larger arena through writing competitions in both prose and poetry. Students gradually master the essential

components of quality writing: development of a thesis statement; deployment of smooth transitions, placement of topic sentences, and forging an effective conclusion. The composition curriculum covers narrative, argumentative, descriptive, and process writing. Instructors present selections from time-honored authors as models for emulation. Combined with an emphasis on recitation and public speaking from Pre-K3 onwards, the study of Rhetoric is essential to serving the development of children, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and intellectually. By these means, they are able to read, speak, write, and think well. These skills are essential to their future success, whatever path they choose for further study or as a career. Small teacher-to-student ratios in the younger grades enable direct interventions for struggling students, who do individualized work with a Teacher Aide.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Using the Singapore method, STCS employs a Concrete, Pictorial, and Abstract (CPA) progression in Mathematics instruction which emphasizes number bonds, bar modeling, and mental math, enabling students to master concepts by stages. Beginning in Pre-K3, Mathematics is taught in two-block periods per day, morning and afternoon. New concepts are introduced during the first period, while the second period is devoted to practice. This method is inspired by emergent brain research on memory acquisition, allowing for interstitial time, but with same-day reinforcement. Students struggling to master concepts are identified in formative assessments in Math 1 each day, then receive daily remediation through direct instruction in Math 2. Problem-based learning is foundational to this approach.

Children begin exploring number sense in Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 with the use of manipulatives. In kindergarten through Grade 2, number bonds help children decide which operation is needed for solving specific types of word problems. Students in Grade 5 survey Euclid's Elements. Students from kindergarten through Grade 8 practice a variety of mental math strategies to solve computational problems before learning to solve them using an algorithm.

Students learn to solve two- and three-digit addition and subtraction problems using the "Make 10" strategy. Those in Grades 1 and 2 solve math word problems using number bonds. Knowledge of whole and part relationships helps students analyze and decide how to approach word problems. These children count money, read analogue clocks, and begin to study geometry. By the end of Grade 1, students can count money in both coins and bills, and readily recognize geometrical shapes, both plane and solid figures. Students also analyze geometry using symmetry, congruency, and patterning. A variety of manipulatives is used to illustrate these concepts.

Students are introduced to bar modeling at the end of Grade 2. They use bar modeling regularly to solve word problems. The use of bar models is a versatile and transferable skill that students use to visualize a range of math concepts, including, among others, fractions, ratios, and percentages. Drawing bar models for word problems allows students to determine the knowns and unknowns in real-world scenarios. This method deepens the CPA approach, especially the pictorial phase, as it allows students to illustrate the mathematical information given in problems. In this way they are prepared to understand more complex mathematics on a conceptual level. Students with demonstrated acumen benefit from the challenging curriculum of the STCS Enriched Mathematics program for Grades 4 through 8, to augment acquisition of 21st century skills. Students learn specific applications of math concepts for the fields of Engineering, Art, and Chemistry. Throughout, our goal is for students to demonstrate their understanding of quantity and the meaning of numbers, rather than to simply apply algorithms.

Formal mathematical assessment occurs through regular chapter and cumulative unit tests. Several online tools for assessment of students' skills foster technology integration goals at STCS. Group analysis of large or complex problems promotes students' socio-emotional and intellectual development.

### **1d. Science**

The STCS Wonder and Wisdom framework deliberately structures key science lessons to move students from a material understanding to an awareness of human culture and the transcendent. For example, students experiment with pigments and collative agents that were utilized by medieval monks for adorning cloth,

parchment, and plaster, and then apply these concepts to the production of icons and paintings in Art classes.

Science instruction begins in Pre-K3 with the exploration of textures, shapes, and qualities of different objects and substances, often culminating in a craft or experiment. Starting in kindergarten, the Nancy Larson Science curriculum ensures that lessons continue to be hands-on and multidisciplinary. At this time, kindergarten children begin to decode informational texts.

Younger students explore topics in life science, physical science, and earth science, reinforced with hands-on learning. Second-graders conduct experiments using the scientific method within a lesson frame that includes prediction, materials, procedure, observation, and conclusion. In Grade 3, students focus on the study of planet Earth and outer space. In Grade 4, children learn about organisms, ecosystems, and different forms of energy, while Grade 5 students explore various kinds of systems from micro- to macro-scale, including human metabolism and the movement of galaxies. Lessons are sequenced to show the interrelation of concepts from one area of focus to another.

The middle school curriculum continues to feature hands-on, multidisciplinary projects. Students work independently on a research project every year. Each of them prepares an exhibit for the Science Fair held each spring; they present their results to a group of local scientific and engineering experts for evaluation. Students solve monthly engineering challenges during this same semester. They are formally assessed through their daily work and culminating tests at the end of each unit. Younger and older pupils are also assessed on their performance in experiments.

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

In Social Studies, STCS students benefit from the deliberate integration of History and Geography, enriched by coordinated literary selections in ELA classes. The study of physical geography begins early at STCS: kindergarten children learn to identify all 50 states on a map of America by the end of the year. Lessons in geography are more deeply integrated with historical studies starting in Grade 3, so that students have a sense of where major events took place, from the early civilizations of Sumer, Akkad, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. This integration deepens in Grade 4 with the start of the Civilization sequence, moving from the origins of modern humans, and culminating in Grade 8 with study of World War II up to the current War on Terror.

This comprehensive approach to eras and cultures fosters strong student engagement. Pupils in Grade 5, for example, study the Middle Ages. They consider the physical geography of North Africa and the Arabian and Iberian peninsulas, while reading *The Song of Roland*, an epic written in homage to Charlemagne and his redoubtable knights. Students perform parts of this stirring poem in class, thereby gaining a panoramic view of the period, contextualized by a near contemporary work of literary art. Concurrent projects in Art introduce students to the medieval process of fashioning illuminated manuscripts. This integrated and interdisciplinary system of teaching and learning serves to engage students by giving them many and quite varied means to discover a preferred pathway into the art, history, geography, poetry, and music of a particular period. These experiences, year by year, help students appreciate the many facets and varieties of human cultures.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

From two-block Mathematics instruction in the Singapore method each day, to beginning phonogram work in Language Arts, this age-appropriate yet challenging Pre-K curriculum is custom designed to promote school readiness. The mathematics curriculum uses hands-on materials such as balances, counters, and blocks to establish concepts of weight, addition, and patterns. Students develop language and vocabulary through poetry recitation and the use of nursery rhymes, fables, and fairy tales. The curated selection of exceptional books for story time promotes the acquisition of listening skills, literary element awareness, library skills, and prereading skills that emerging readers need. In Pre-K3, children begin memorizing and reciting simple poems to develop the public speaking skills they will use throughout elementary and middle

school. Student engagement at this level is often driven by the delight that children have for the cadence, themes, vocabulary, and rhythm of nursery rhymes.

Hands-on science activities are a staple of the curriculum. Children engage in fine arts, physical education, and music daily. Students learn to read music with the Ward method, sing Latin hymns, and perform in school events. The Art program engages them with simple shapes that evolve into detailed drawings, nurturing a curious and creative spirit. Teachers employ whole-group, small-group, and learning center instruction to engage students of different abilities. Teachers of the very young also have a full-time aide to offer direct instructional interventions for children who need it.

The Early Childhood program offers strong Catholic formation, starting with basic prayers, proper Mass etiquette, and lessons in the Montessori-inspired Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The teaching of Catholic virtues throughout STCS begins in Pre-K3 to help form students who love God and who have compassion and respect for others. These curricular elements foster the spiritual, academic, and socio-emotional growth of the youngest students.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The classical curriculum of STCS offers students a broad array of supplemental courses, each of which plays a vital role in supporting the total development of the whole child. Physical education classes promote students' fitness, spatial awareness, and agility; fine arts courses in Art and Music advance students' appreciation of the transcendent dimensions of human work and creativity; foreign language studies in Latin and Spanish facilitate students' intellectual agility and cultural awareness.

Instruction in the graphic arts is recursive and incremental. The curriculum encourages divergence of expression within each medium. Under the tutelage of a master artist, students progress from introductory exercises at the start of a unit to exhibition of their works twice each year. To promote their engagement and sense of accomplishment, work from every student is displayed. Students in kindergarten to Grade 8 display their work to the wider parish community by taking part in the "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster contest sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Students at each grade level also collaborate on group projects, honing their decision-making skills and developing a spirit of cooperation.

Students from Pre-K 3 through Grade 8 receive choral music instruction (via an adaptation of the Ward Method) several times per week. Children of one or more grade levels perform for the Sugar Canes, the parish senior citizen group, twice a year. In mid-December, those from Grades 6 through 8 entertain patients at a nearby hospital and at a senior retirement center. Several times a year, student volunteers perform for social or fundraising events. Since many of the parish liturgical texts are in ecclesiastical Latin, instructors in the Music and Latin programs collaborate. This partnership helps to promote comprehension, articulation, memorization, and vocal blending. Studying the music scores also helps augment students' Latin vocabulary.

All children take part in the physical education program. The curriculum is recursive as well as increasingly complex. Daily physical education classes are conducted for students in every grade. In addition, those in Pre-K3 through Grade 5 enjoy a daily supervised recess period. The physical education curriculum has a broader focus than mere corporal fitness. The children learn about saints, whose model virtues are presented as examples for them to emulate. In addition, lessons in fair gamesmanship and safe play help the students work not only on their personal skills but also on the broader concept of team building. Varying the group configuration enables the children to grow accustomed to interacting with different personalities and temperaments. Included in the PE curriculum are lessons about proper hygiene, safety, and nutrition.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through Grade 8, all children study Latin. Kindergarteners have lessons two days per week; Grade 1 children, three. Those in Grades 2 through 8 study Latin daily. Pictograms and models encourage children in the younger grades to speak the language without the encumbrance of English translation. This is especially advantageous at STCS since so many of the children speak more than one language at home. Beginning in Grade 5, students make the transition to a lexical consideration of Latin. Memorization of forms, parts of speech, idioms, and vocabulary provides the basis

for writing, speaking, and reading of the language. The children practice and perform ecclesiastical chants as part of the program; their understanding of the Latin text enhances their performance. The curriculum includes units in culture, history, mythology, and geography. Middle school students sit the National Latin Examination each year. All middle-school students also study the Spanish language and the culture of those who speak it. In mid-December, the Grade 6 students present a pageant honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe; the performance includes singing, praying, and dancing. For the past several years, the children have been invited to perform for parishioners prior to the start of the actual feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Spanish program introduces the students to customs of Hispanic peoples; they learn points of etiquette, make posters showing specific cultural features, and compose poems or dialogues to show their skill in the language.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

The rigorous Liberal Arts curriculum is designed to challenge each student academically. If a student is not making satisfactory academic progress (those with a “D” or “F” average in any subject at mid-term or at the end of an academic quarter), the administration observes daily instruction to determine whether the teacher is using strategies to engage a differentiated learning style to best benefit the struggling student. The teacher and administrators also examine the student’s behavior and general attitude toward learning.

Faculty, parents, administrators, and the student collaborate on a support plan and achievement goals. The faculty, parents, and administrators will review the student’s ability and willingness to follow classroom procedures and rules, stay organized, and complete and submit assignments on time. The student’s academic assessments are also analyzed to determine which objectives he or she is having difficulty mastering.

Students may be invited to participate in Cura Personalis, a small group, free tutoring service that takes place once a week. Students who need more support may sign up for individual tutoring before and after school with faculty members who work through the tutoring consortium. For cases in which in-school tutoring is not an option or insufficient for a student, the administration refers parents to local tutoring services with proven track records for enhancing student performance at STCS.

In some cases, parents are invited to visit with the child’s pediatrician to consult about any possible learning difference or impairment for which a student should be tested, so that an accommodation plan may be implemented. At the end of the school year, students in need of additional remediation attend the Summer Griffin Gateway Success Program, a set of skill-building classes to prepare them for the next grade level by strengthening study habits and content mastery.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

Students who consistently perform above expectations at STCS benefit from customized instruction so that they are sufficiently challenged to reach the next level of success. Students in kindergarten through Grade 2 who excel in computation and abstract reasoning with numbers have an individualized curriculum directed by an Enriched Mathematics instructor. This keeps students engaged, while providing them with a systematic introduction to advanced concepts, keyed to their interests.

Similarly, advanced readers are furnished with more complicated texts which they summarize orally for the instructor, so that students’ comprehension can be directly assessed. In breakout sessions with the main instructor or aide, children engage in advanced phonogram and vocabulary work. Appropriate texts are selected according to reading index ratings and the interest of the child, to provide a coherent course for accelerated study that is both thorough and customized. This approach promotes ongoing engagement.

Students who exhibit mathematical or reading abilities above grade level are often partnered with students who struggle with concepts. This peer interaction and assistance during the introduction of new daily content has proved mutually beneficial for student partners. These exercises help to foster social and emotional development among students as they provide support to one another during classroom practice

sessions in solving problems or explicating assigned readings.

Starting in Grade 4, students performing above grade level in mathematics, as evinced by classroom and standardized test scores in the 85th percentile or higher, are admitted to the Enriched Mathematics Program, wherein they receive individualized instruction in small groups.

Students who consistently read above grade level are assigned challenging projects that range from etymological research to explorations in poetry or grammar. As an individualized learning experience, one STCS student notably wrote a treatise on gerunds.

**3c.** Special education

**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**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Among the essential means of engaging students at STCS is the House system, which aids in the growth of students mentally, spiritually, physically, and socially. Each House consists of a smaller, organized community within the student body and is led by a faculty mentor. This structure promotes a strong sense of camaraderie and support that does not devolve into cliques. Beginning in Grade 5, students are selected to be members of one of the three Houses.

Within the House system, children's natural competitiveness is directed towards the aid of others: fellow House brothers and sisters, the STCS community at large, the parish, the Church, society, and the whole of humanity. Houses compete with each other annually in an overnight athletic competition for middle-school students that incorporates several physical events. Houses also hold an academic competition in the spring where all House members showcase their talents in a variety of challenges involving Math, Science, Latin, Music, and Language Arts.

Each House chooses, plans, and executes a service project as a way to exhibit Christian charity to members of the wider community. Faculty members serving as Heads of House are ordinarily Humanities instructors for Grades 6, 7, and 8. Heads of House are expected to cultivate particular virtues among the student members. By these means, they build up a distinctive ethos of Christian life and charity over time according to the characteristic virtue of the respective House patron saint.

Several after-school activities provide opportunity for students in Pre-K3 through Grade 8 to acquire skills in art, chess, Spanish, mathematics, dance, and music, including lessons in choir, piano, and voice.

The annual Field Day is an Olympics-inspired set of games that focus on three Greek virtues, *philia*, *agonia*, and *sophrosyne* — friendship, competition, and self-control. Each class is divided into a Blue Team and a Gold Team for relay races and other tests of balance, coordination, and speed. The highlight of the event is the ceremonial Torch Relay during which a group of Grade 8 students runs a lap and then passes the torch to the Grade 7 class.

Athletics are an important part of the formation of students at STCS. Various team sports provide a means to form the will and develop teamwork through commitment and selflessness. Team sports also offer the opportunity to exercise Christian virtues, especially patience and humility, as well as such natural virtues such as punctuality, discipline, and honesty.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

STCS students grow in terms of character, altruism, and knowledge through their service to the parish and wider community. Because STCS students are too young to travel independently, they are often accompanied by parents to volunteer venues. Many of these efforts also serve the needs of parents or grandparents directly.

Students learn to be good stewards of the environment through participation in the Keep Sugar Land Beautiful initiative. The children learn the value of their contributions to the common good for seasonal and ongoing clean-up events at municipal parks and local nature preserves. The students' appreciation of American History is deepened by the Salute to Our Heroes program that they stage each year to honor those who either actively serve in the military or who have done so in the past. The children of STCS are one of the main contributors to the parish community Socks and Gloves Drive to collect warm clothing for the needy. Students regularly donate food and hygiene items to the St. Vincent de Paul Society's food pantry. Children visit the pantry on the final collection day so that they can learn the value of helping others. All of these aspects of community engagement help students to see the larger pattern of relationships, support, commerce, and environmental consciousness in the local area and beyond.

Students' Service-Learning initiatives also present many opportunities for parental engagement, since the Saint Theresa Association of Parents (STAP) coordinates adult volunteers to assist students in these charitable undertakings. Families receive a modest tuition discount for volunteering their time through the Partnership in Mission program. Parents recommend policy and procedure changes through STAP. They also connect STCS with community business leaders. Parents assume the lead for coaching students for the annual Private School Interscholastic Association (PSIA) tournament. They sacrifice their time to help hone the skills of the members of the student Chess Team. Parents also appreciate seeing their children engaged in good game play and technique in soccer, baseball, volleyball, basketball, and track. Seeing these contributions to STCS inspires students to get involved in a wide array of team sports.

Parents join the faculty and staff in celebrating students' academic, athletic, and service achievements at morning assemblies each Friday. Information posted to social media or sent via email encourages students to continue to make a difference as they are recognized for their hard work and good deeds.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

In keeping with its motto of *fides et ratio* (faith and reason), STCS values both the life of the mind and the constant cultivation of spiritual gifts. This two-fold dynamic not only shapes the personal and professional growth of the faculty and staff of STCS, but also frames the values that instructors strive to inculcate in their students. They aim to inspire life-long learners by bearing direct witness to the value of constant self-improvement, in studies and in spiritual growth.

STCS is characterized by an uncommonly high degree of scholarship among the faculty and staff of a primary school: seven members of the faculty and administrative team hold master's degrees in fields as varied as Music, Education, Divinity, Business Administration, and Teaching. Four members of the faculty and administrative staff have an earned Ph.D. and one or more master's degrees, representing outstanding achievement in Historical Theology, English Literature, Philosophy, Food Science Chemistry, and Medieval Latin. This impressive array of intellectual accomplishments means that professional development and lifelong learning are an integral part of the school's self-identity. Interdisciplinary collaboration emerges almost spontaneously from faculty conversations about mutual interests and insights.

The achievements of faculty and staff contribute organically to a growth mindset across campus, where colleagues encourage and support each other to develop their full potential in all areas. Faculty meet weekly in dedicated Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions where they exchange lesson plans, discuss their current professional reading and studies, note current trends in student behavior, and recommend resources and strategies to each other.

Faculty and staff have three days at the start of the year, as well as a half-day or whole-day session once a month, dedicated to the pursuit of critical learning and spiritual goals. The program for professional development is deliberately coordinated each semester for pursuit of particular curriculum standards, support to our strategic plan, or emphasis on individual teaching goals, as recommended by peer classroom observations, student learning outcomes, or student socio-emotional needs. In-service experiences focus on presentations about state learning standards and the writings of such classical authors as Cicero, Seneca, Homer, and Epictetus. Spiritual reflection, liturgical engagement, prayer, and the sharing of life-changing experiences are built into professional development days. Workshops focus on helping students build emotional intelligence through the study of literature, technology, Boystown Social Skills training, mimetic and Socratic teaching, lesson plan development, and strategies for classroom management.

### **4. School Leadership:**

Academic, spiritual, and administrative initiatives emerge from and support the STCS mission to "furnish students with an outstanding Classical education informed by the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition," and to provide them with "a rigorous Liberal Arts curriculum that gives STCS students a firm foundation in faith and morals." Leadership at STCS is first and foremost service to these ideals, which ensure the flourishing of each and all the members of the educational community.

As a parochial school in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, STCS is governed by the pastor of the parish. An Advisory Board provides professional advice and guidance while also offering financial and social support to approved initiatives. Among other duties, the Board facilitates connections between community leaders and STCS in support of the pastor and headmaster. The headmaster and assistant principal carry out their daily leadership duties, motivated by a desire to reach those objectives consistent with the pastor's academic, spiritual, and cultural goals for STCS.

The headmaster and assistant principal take very seriously their roles as servant-leaders, generously offering their time, expertise, and guidance to all faculty and supporting staff. A small but efficient leadership team assists them in executing the duties necessary to incarnate the academic vision of the pastor. Guided by the pastor with input from the Advisory Board, the headmaster and assistant principal champion and work to advance academic rigor, Christian identity, Classical curriculum and pedagogy, good community and parent relations, financial stability, and well-ordered facilities.

To promote the professional development of faculty, the headmaster and assistant principal have arranged teachers into grade-range or subject-area clusters that meet weekly to work on vertical alignment, to plan strategic interventions for struggling students, and to share classroom management strategies. Leaders for each cluster serve as representatives on the Headmaster's Council and attend meetings to facilitate the completion of tasks and planning events. This structure empowers faculty leaders, granting them the ability to make substantial and direct contributions to the academic and spiritual life of STCS. Teacher leaders assess annual and weekly lesson plans for their clusters and offer peer observations and feedback to their colleagues. Each faculty member assumes extracurricular duties through which they serve the STCS community, assuming the role of the faculty sponsor of a club, the coach of an athletic team, or the advisor of the Student Council or National Junior Honor Society chapter.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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STCS consistently employs a single, multi-modal instructional practice in teaching: direct instruction in every subject at every level. STCS sees this as essential for promoting student success. It requires faculty who are willing to invest the time and energy to become masters of the content that they teach. Through direct instruction, teachers present information, skills, values, and higher-level thinking using diverse strategies and teaching to multiple modalities: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Direct instruction entails constant, real-time formative assessment, which enables faculty to be immediately aware when students are struggling to comprehend a topic. When this happens, teachers instantly employ other means to explicate content. These strategies are coordinated and aligned across grade levels so that achievement at the 80th percentile is reached consistently and maintained annually.

Students in Grades 1-5 are directly taught to spell and read six new words daily through the Riggs spelling and reading program, through phonograms, rules for spelling, and vocabulary instruction. The daily program of Latin instruction reinforces spelling and vocabulary content in English Language Arts. Similarly, classroom teachers present the Latin and Greek roots of English words to students beginning in Grade 3, directly revealing how English derivatives retain their core meaning. Students in Grades 6-8 extend their word studies through analysis of Latin and Greek morphemes.

Teachers present grammar and syntax as a part of integrated lessons that feature direct decoding and encoding of words. Such lessons lead to the mastery of words and sentences, promoting student success in writing. Children in primary grades advance in their writing skills, moving from simple sentence construction to the crafting of advanced structures in paragraphs.

STCS also extends the practice of direct instruction to the teaching of mathematics. Using the Singapore method, students are directly taught how to apply mental math skills for solving problem-based scenarios at every grade level. As students advance into higher grade levels, they are directly taught strategies for solving multiple-step word problems.

Students begin to identify maps of the countries of the world through direct instruction in geography. Facility in the poetic arts is acquired through direct instruction, founded on memorization and performance of traditional, time-honored selections. Spanish lessons culminate in students' successful delivery of short speeches and prayers to audiences at school and parish events. Direct instruction demands close and unstinting collaboration between student and teacher, leading to social and emotional growth alongside academic development.

## **PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION**

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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?      \$10692  
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$1927

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      9%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      30%