

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 Mrs. Lisa M. Figueredo
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7303 Southwest 64th Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Miami State FL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 33143-2946

County Miami-Dade

Telephone (305) 661-8591 Fax (305) 661-2181

Web site/URL http://www.stamiami.org E-mail lfigueredo@stamiami.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* Dr. Kim Pryzbylski E-mail kpryzbylski@theadom.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Archdiocese of Miami Tel. (305) 762-1070

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 Mrs. Christina Leyva
(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):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
 - 0 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	41	31	72
K	19	29	48
1	28	18	46
2	23	23	46
3	21	23	44
4	28	28	56
5	15	31	46
6	16	28	44
7	18	37	55
8	12	27	39
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	221	275	496

*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
 - 0.6 % Asian
 - 0.4 % Black or African American
 - 95.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % White
 - 1.4 % 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: 10%

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	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	27
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	46
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	473
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Portuguese, Spanish, French

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 17 %
84 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22 %

Total number students who qualify: 109

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

64 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>27</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 15

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.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 17:1

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	94%	94%	94%	94%	94%
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.

The Mission of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is to foster a community of life-long learners, led by the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, through a trans-disciplinary approach to learning, initiated by inquiry in which the students will think globally and display acts of compassion through service.

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

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School (STA) is accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference and the National Council for Private Schools. Located in the heart of South Miami, St. Thomas opened its doors in September of 1964 to students in kindergarten through 4th grade. Since, it has grown exponentially to meet the needs of the growing community and currently educates students from pre-K2 through 8th grade. The school prides and distinguishes itself through stellar academics and a beloved faith-based community.

STA serves 496 students in Pre-K2 through 8th grade. The student demographics are reflected of the mainly Hispanic/Latino community in Miami-Dade with 95% of students Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Other. Twenty-two percent of students are eligible for Title 1 services, 13% receive special education services, and 17% are English Language Learners (ELL). STA's faculty includes 42 teachers and 20 members in the support staff. Classes in grades pre-K2 through 2nd grade have a fulltime aide, in addition to the classroom teacher to best manage and meet the needs of all students. Approximately 64% of faculty have specialized endorsements in Reading, Gifted Education, Exceptional Student Education and/or English for Speakers of Other Languages and 44% of classroom teachers have graduate level degrees. This amazing teaching staff is supported by a dedicated leadership team, which includes the pastor, principal, assistant principal, and counselor. Together with supportive parents, STA strives to foster a community of life-long learners.

St. Thomas the Apostle students begin their educational journey at age two. Students experience the joys of learning through play and exploration. Encouraging creativity and individuality, their early childhood teachers introduce readiness skills, and the friendly and nurturing environment enhances each child's self-esteem and love for learning. In kindergarten through 5th grade, the curriculum focuses on the development of the whole child as an investigator and problem solver of their world. Teachers' transdisciplinary model of learning uses knowledge and skills to teach globally aware students. The middle school program provides a framework of learning, which encourages students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers. It emphasizes intellectual challenge, encouraging students to make connections between their studies in traditional subjects and the world around them. The curriculum in all grade levels includes the core academic subjects (English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies). In addition, all students are provided with instruction in music, art, technology, Spanish, physical education, and religion, focusing on the Catholic faith.

To meet the needs of the general student body, STA implements multiple forms of differentiated instruction, which are reflected in teachers' lesson plans. In addition to the general education program, STA offers specialized services and instruction to meet the needs of gifted learners and students with Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and other exceptionalities.

In 2017, to further incorporate 21st century learning and prepare students for the future, STA began working towards Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) accreditation through the Florida Catholic Conference. The STREAM approach encourages teachers and students to use an interdisciplinary method to enhance authentic and deep learning, while encouraging students to create, problem solve, engineer, and collaborate.

STA recently enhanced and updated their computer lab, renaming it the "sparkSTation" and recognizes it as the creative brain of the campus. This open and active learning environment strengthens critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and engagement in STREAM. At the sparkSTation, students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade, design, tinker, and innovate utilizing robotic components, computers, 3D printing, and craft material. Students in 3rd and 6th grades compete annually in the Toshiba/NSTA Exploravision competition. Winning at the regional level three times (2015, 2017, 2019) and winning 2nd place at the Exploravision Nationals (2018), the students' collaborative and innovative ideas, under the guidance of their teacher-coaches, reflects the core goals present in STREAM education.

At the heart of STA, there exists a deep level of commitment to advance students' Catholic identity; the integration of the "religion" component referenced in STREAM is cross-curricular and visible in all core subjects. Students actively participate in many service projects to help those less fortunate. For example,

seeking to support patients going through cancer treatment, students combined their artistic talent and faith-instruction to decorate “kindness rocks” with inspirational and encouraging messages, later visiting a local hospital and hand delivering them to patients seeking treatment. Similar to this, STA students participate in many student-initiated, led, and produced service projects. In addition to service learning projects and direct instruction in the Catholic religion, students’ faith formation is further enhanced through prayer and weekly liturgy, as well as integrated throughout the teaching and learning process.

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 the Apostle’s overarching mission and philosophy is seamlessly incorporated school-wide in all subject areas. The mission of the school is to foster a community of life-long learners, led by the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, through a trans-disciplinary learning approach, initiated by inquiry in which the students think globally and display acts of compassion through service. Correspondingly, the vision of STA’s faculty and staff is to create a partnership with parents, recognizing them as the primary educators of their children. Hand in hand, this community collaborates and prepares students to contribute effectively to the prosperity of society. Through the unity and integration of the mission and vision, STA creates thoughtfully designed intellectual goals and objectives that foster learning in a safe, inspiring, and thought-provoking environment. Therefore, it is STA’s goal to offer cross-curricular learning experiences, which challenge critical thinking and analysis in all subject areas. Additionally, in all grade levels, STA teachers emphasize a strong focus in teaching key executive functioning skills to embed life-long organizational and operational skills in all students.

Seamlessly uniting the belief that executive functioning skills are at the core of successful learning and leadership, STA’s academic goals and objectives include four areas of focus. First, to aid students in acquiring the sequential mastery of basic skills, which cultivate attitudes, ideas and habits necessary for productive development. Second, STA teachers foster recollection, analysis, organizational, synthetization, and application skills. Third, a strong emphasis is placed on nurturing and unfolding the students’ development of their God-given talents, creativity, and interests. The culmination of each of these areas of focus, leads to STA faculty’s final objective: To ignite in and challenge students to seek and develop a healthy curiosity and lifelong thirst for knowledge and growth. To achieve these academic goals, STA provides a curriculum at age/developmentally appropriate levels that builds through the grades to gradually lead students to the independence and knowledge necessary to organize and synthesize the world as globally minded citizens.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Reading and Language Arts curriculum at STA is a comprehensive and rigorous program, which uses the Archdiocese of Miami (ADOM) standards to develop highly analytical and interpretative learners who can read and write at or beyond grade level. The ADOM standards are a composite of the Florida Standards and religion standards, all which aim to promote prominent critical thinking and leadership components.

Students at STA receive 90-minutes of reading and language arts instruction daily. In the elementary grades, this curriculum focuses on the expansion of phonemic and phonological awareness, alphabetic principles, oral and spoken vocabulary, passage comprehension, fluency, and writing development. Furthermore, at a grade-appropriate level, students are required to take a deep and analytic approach while reading literary works and teachers integrate novels to nurture and cultivate a love of reading. Students are taught to identify key literary elements and concepts, for example: allegory, characters, figurative language, plot concepts, point of view, and symbolism. Moreover, students in 6th through 8th grade are required to write a well-structured essay within a time constraint and complete research papers using MLA and APA citation criteria. The expanded writing and research curriculum at STA helps to promote student confidence in the acquisition of knowledge-based skills. These skills will aid students in future projects and endeavors while in high school and beyond.

In order to best challenge students in these core competencies, STA implements the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Reading® (HMH) Series and the Sadlier Vocabulary Workshop® series. The HMH Reading Series is a research and results proven literacy program which scaffolds foundational reading skills throughout the sequence in order to inspire students to be critical thinkers while reading and writing. Additionally, in an effort to expand student vocabulary, the Sadlier Vocabulary Workshop® series is utilized

in grades 1st through 8th. This vocabulary program scaffolds instruction to promote students' word understanding, and application.

St. Thomas the Apostle teachers use a wide variety of formative assessments to serve as diagnostic and progress monitoring tools to drive and assist in differentiating instruction. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data help the teachers at STA create homogenous reading groups. These flexible reading groups help facilitate individualized learning needs, which may include elevated or remedial instruction. Web-based programs such as Lexia® and Reading Plus® aid teachers in collecting quantitative data to personalize instruction by utilizing the programs' adaptive assessments to monitor the progress of each student. On a school-wide level, the data offered by these web-based programs assists teachers in year-to-year progress monitoring to further tailor instruction and thus enhance student's academic experiences and development. The fruits of this rigorous curriculum are evident in STA students' scores on the TerraNova exam administered in March 2019, where overall the average percentile in the Reading Composite was 80%.

1c. Mathematics

St. Thomas the Apostle adheres to the mathematics standards of the ADOM and adopted the Go Math!® series in 2018 to further enhance a comprehensive and language-based approach to teaching math. Integrating the 5E's instructional model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate), teachers purposely plan and help students elicit prior knowledge to enhance and construct new ideas and concepts. While teachers develop weekly and quarterly plans, they reevaluate and restructure their lessons based on daily informal assessments. Standards are taught using a hands-on approach where math manipulatives and real-life scenarios are constantly explored. Further, to ensure differentiation, students who need extra help are given additional aide whereas students who excel are challenged further with elevated material during independent work cycles.

To further individualize and enhance each student's math education, students and teachers use the web-based program IXL®. This program offers a comprehensive math curriculum, personalized guidance, actionable analytics, and continuous diagnostic support. Moreover, it allows teachers to easily switch between grades and skills to help in differentiation of instruction.

Students in grades 5th through 8th take summative evaluations to demonstrate mastery of acquired skills in the grade level standards. Teachers then use the results of these assessments as indicators to address areas of remediation and/or strengths, to further individualize students' educational course. In grades 6th through 8th, students are exposed to all mathematical content strands (number sense, properties, and operations; measurement; geometry and spatial sense; data analysis, statistics, and probabilities; algebra and functions). In 6th grade students focus on pre-algebra while 7th and 8th grade general education build on algebraic content in preparation for high school. In addition, St. Thomas offers a dual enrollment honors courses in Algebra I and Geometry for students who master grade level expectations, thereby allowing them to receive high school credit via the ADOM Virtual School.

Overall, teachers at STA focus and strive to help students achieve mathematical proficiency. It is their goal to ensure students have a conceptual understanding of math, exhibit procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and finally maintain a productive disposition to mathematics. Students at St. Thomas scored an average of 81% on the mathematics composite score of the TerraNova 3 exam administered in March, 2019.

1d. Science

STA's rigorous and cross-curricular science program recognizes the importance of educating students in the scientific method to better prepare them to confidently confront the scientifically advanced and technologically savvy world they live in today. Students are encouraged to observe the world around them, inquire and question how and why things occur, analyze patterns, synthesize possible solutions and create meaningful contributions to their scientific inquiries. To advance students interested in the sciences, students have the opportunity to participate in thematic STREAM curriculum, robotics courses, and the Fairchild Challenge, which is a community competition of various challenges that require scientific research and

writing skills, as well as artistic and creative displays of learning.

Using HMH's ScienceFusion (1st through 5th grade) and Interactive Science by Pearson (6th through 8th grade), students learn, advance, and interact with science by gaining an in-depth understanding in explorative and inquiry-based learning, which further develops year after year. Students in kindergarten through 8th grade participate in weekly STREAM activities facilitated by classroom teachers and a STREAM coach. Many grade-appropriate activities are planned to expose each student to various strands of science throughout the year. For example, students in kindergarten create a plant center in which they grow plants, making observations and predictions, gathering and logging data as the plant develops. Students in first grade investigate how blubber insulates animals; first graders also research other sources of energy by constructing a potato battery and questioning whether agricultural-produce can create power. Furthermore, students follow the engineering design cycle to "discover" science and math in real world problems. In 2nd grade, students design and develop an anemometer. In 3rd grade, students engineer and build bridges and foam rockets. Students in the 4th through 8th grade conduct experiments, build vehicles, use JavaScript to code with blocks and create applications. Moreover, the teachers at STA work together to integrate science, technology, and the arts by planning with the Computer Science and Art teachers to enhance students' knowledge acquisition and present material in a multi-sensory and cross-disciplinary approach.

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

Educating global citizens who are active, responsible and reflective members of society and who display acts of compassion through service is a fundamental part of the mission of St. Thomas the Apostle. Using a cross-curricular approach, STA teachers integrate societal and global current events, together with significant historical moments and eras to teach and encourage students to learn from the past. Students' are inspired to think universally about historical moments and explore how they affect and influence our current customs, politics, policies, and culture. Through this explorative and critical approach, students learn the significance of today's societal actions and its impact on future generations.

Students in grades kindergarten through 5th use the myWorld Interactive social studies program, which encourages students to explore their world, expand their thinking, and engage with the content being taught using the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework. Students' growth is scaffolded and measured using both traditional and STREAM forms of assessment that reflect the academic standards set forth by the ADOM and their teachers. In the middle grades, a strong emphasis is placed on the instruction of document-based questioning (DBQ) and the writing of reflective essays on primary sources while integrating US History (6th grade), Civics (7th grade) and World History (8th grade). Moreover, students perform real-world applications using authentic and project-based assessments, thus learning and enlightening them on the topic at hand. Teachers incorporate STREAM methodology in all lessons and encourage student-led demonstrations of higher order thinking.

Finally, teachers use online resources like DOGO News to keep students engaged in current events and encourage virtuous civic duty by connecting the curricula to daily life, as well as making faith-based connections and integrating proactive Catholic living.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

STA's cross-curricular preK-2 through preK-4 program enhances and promotes school readiness and future success in the primary grades. Students in the preK program are provided with the foundational building blocks to help them excel in the kindergarten and elementary curriculum. Moreover, the program exposes children to a faith-based educational environment during the most critical developmental ages.

STA's skilled and nurturing teachers use the Abeka® preschool curriculum, which features a traditional approach to learning, encompasses spiral reviews, and engages students in countless hands-on activities. Recognizing the importance of role-playing in the younger years, students are given a plethora of opportunities to develop their imagination; classrooms are equipped with dramatic play areas, which include

costumes, props, puppets, and many more items to promote real life exploration and pretend play. The systematic learning centers and print-rich environment engage and encourage students to learn through play and develop appropriate social skills. Consequently, students begin building a strong foundation for academic success, developing early reading, writing, math, science, and listening skills.

Pre-Kindergarten students at St. Thomas develop powerful communication and social skills through music and movement, free and structured play, and integrated thematic units. An important emphasis is placed on gross and fine motor development through guided exercises, in both the general education and physical education (PE) classroom. The goal of STA's early education program is to ultimately develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring individuals who are ready to integrate into a rigorous kindergarten curriculum.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

STA provides students with a vast array of activities to strengthen their interests and opportunities in the arts. The Visual Arts teachers plan with classroom teachers regularly to create meaningful cross-curricular art projects. The art program exposes students to the world of art using an assortment of materials and tools, thus providing them with channels to express themselves creatively. Meanwhile, the music program provides students with the opportunity to play instruments in the strings, brass, and percussion families. Students can also participate in the various school choirs, which teach and enhance vocal techniques. In addition, STA offers optional extracurricular after-school activities allowing students to fortify and explore their strengths and interests. Such activities include modern dance, art, musical theater, coding, and chess. All the arts programs lend themselves to a highly structured enrichment curriculum, which encourages students to be exceedingly expressive and innovative thinkers.

The physical education (PE) program at STA offers students, beginning at the age of 3, an opportunity to learn about team sports, physical health, nutrition, and the development of fine and gross motor skills. The PE curriculum aims to teach students who are spiritually, mentally, and physically self-aware and balanced by educating students on the importance of health, exercise, and moderation throughout life. Students are thoughtfully and systematically led through numerous modules including sports education, nutrition, sustaining a healthy body, good sportsmanship, stretching exercises, and cardiovascular health exercises. Additionally, students are taught the importance of nutrition beginning with the importance of hydration in the preK years and developing to proper meal plans to sustain activity level in the middle school years.

STA services a 95% Hispanic student population, of which 17% are categorized as ELL. In order to expand and build on students' strengths it is vital that STA implement a rigorous Spanish program. The curriculum in the Spanish classes introduces students to grammar and vocabulary necessary for fundamental Spanish communication. The Spanish curriculum is carefully implemented and spiraled for students from PreK-3 through 8th grade. It aims to expand on students' development of basic speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. STA believes that with repeated exposure and consistency, students will become bilingual and bi-literate. Students in PreK-3 through 8th grade receive Spanish instruction for 180 minutes a week. Additionally, to further prepare students, STA offers the ADOM dual enrollment program through which 7th and 8th grade students have the opportunity to complete the high school level Spanish curriculum for high school credit. While Spanish language acquisition is at the forefront of the foreign language curriculum, teachers also emphasize the importance of developing culturally aware/sensitive students. Students make cultural connections through literature, visual aids, and multimedia.

STA's media specialist provides students with engaging and newly released book titles, as well as classic titles. Classroom teachers and the media specialist collaborate to create cross-curricular methods of teaching literacy, such as Story Design, Readers Theatre, and Information Literacy Instruction to enhance students' learning experiences. Community outreach activities such as an annual book fair and author visits allow students to engage in literature. Additionally, the media center is home to WSTA, St. Thomas' student-led newscast, where students research current events, write news scripts, and produce a daily broadcast viewed by the student body.

The sparkSTation is a place for students to develop creative solutions to authentic challenges by providing students with an array of powerful tools to aide in their cross-curricular success. Technology teachers

integrate Florida's Computer Science Standards K-8th grade in all lessons with blended subject areas. Further, students are educated on the importance of internet and social media safety. The sparkSTATION lab is a space that fuels student imagination, while providing everything they need to bring their ideas to life.

Embracing the STREAM mentality, students study and explore the design thinking process. STA students are taught and challenged to empathize with the needs of society and create innovative solutions to enhance the world in which they live in. After adopting the STREAM framework, all field trips were re-designed, planned, and enhanced to offer students the opportunity to investigate career and life skills. For example, students in 5th and 7th grades attend field trips to the Junior Achievement (JA) of South Florida. The JA Biztown program offers 5th grade a comprehensive day of learning life skills such as job applications, voting, money management, etc. Students in 7th grade participate in JA Financepark and are exposed and taught about the financial implications of spending money; they create budgets, make large purchases, etc.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Recognizing children's diverse academic needs, the administration and teachers of STA have developed several programs to differentiate instruction and thus enhance students' academic journey. Through the Early Intervention program, STA's trained specialist evaluates all preK4 and kindergarten students to identify academic delays and deficiencies. Once a student is identified as needing academic intervention, they are pulled out of the general class to receive individualized Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies.

Throughout all other grades, tiered intervention is applied when a student is struggling and/or working below grade level standards. Teachers use various teaching methods and strategies such as graphic organizers and explicit instruction to meet the needs of all students. However, those students who continue to struggle on grade level assessments and assignments are identified and closely monitored by the teacher and intervention team (includes guidance counselor and math and reading specialists). With the use of aforementioned computer-based interventions, teachers are able to pinpoint the skills students are exhibiting difficulty and tailor instruction to close the gap. Moreover, if a child is struggling, teachers proactively reach out to parents and communicate the students' progress and areas of difficulty. A plan is devised and implemented by the team with clear goals and objectives. If the student has not exemplified growth and progress, further testing is recommended and an individualized Student Learning Plan (SLP) is created.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Classroom teachers challenge students that are working above grade-level with enrichment activities and performance tasks. These academically rigorous activities and assignments are reflected in teachers weekly lesson plans to ensure that all students are being equally challenged and stimulated.

Beyond classroom enrichment activities, STA provides a gifted program for students whose ability is significantly above their age and grade-level. In 2004, the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (SEAS) program was created for students who exceed the classroom English/Language Arts standards. This specialized pull-out program, servicing students in grades 3rd through 8th, is designed to encourage and promote higher order thinking through differentiated lessons that stimulate an elevated cross-curricular understanding and synthesis of literature and language arts.

Gifted education provides students who need to be further stimulated with opportunities to challenge themselves and learn at an advanced level. In order to qualify for the gifted SEAS program, students must receive a recommendation from their general education teacher and a minimum national standard stanine of 8 in the most recent Reading Composite score of the TerraNova assessment. Once students meet both criteria, they are referred to a psychologist for further evaluation. The results of the Psycho-Educational Evaluation must indicate a minimum Intellectual Quotient (IQ) of 127 or higher on an individually administered IQ assessment.

The curriculum in SEAS challenges students to work above grade level to meet their learning goals. Teachers create thematic units that encourage creative and productive thinking, critical thinking, and independent study and research skills. Students in the program, utilize thought-provoking and analytical

novels to develop critical literacy skills that go beyond the general classroom curriculum. Moreover, teachers in the SEAS program carefully design and construct projects to challenge students and aide in their critical literacy skills development. Some examples of projects include a Living Wax Museum, Market Day Entrepreneurs, and various projects based on novels read in class to allow students to demonstrate creative and critical thinking skills.

3c. Special education

The St. Anthony of Padua Program (SAPP), founded in 2014, is available for students with a diagnosed Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in 1st through 5th grade. This unique pullout program offers a clinical, individualized, and paced learning plan to meet each child's diverse learning needs. All lessons taught in SAPP are scaffolded, systematic, and use a multi-sensory approach with the use of manipulatives to increase retention and understanding.

Throughout the course of the school year, continuous and ongoing assessments monitor students' progress to ensure the academic gaps are closing. The goal of the program is to provide the appropriate interventions to assist students in closing the gap on grade-level standards. Students in the St. Anthony program are formally assessed twice a year to better identify academic delays and monitor progress in order to succeed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

In mathematics, with the intention of monitoring progress and adapting their learning plan to their specific needs, students are formally assessed using the KeyMath™-3 Diagnostic Assessment (KeyMath-3 DA). The data obtained from the assessment is reviewed by the teacher, in collaboration with the school counselor, to further determine individualized instruction and accommodations.

In reading and language arts, students' phonemic awareness is measured using an array of assessments to better understand which phonemic principles the student is exhibiting difficulty with. Among those assessments are the Letter, Names, and Sounds Assessment, Lohmann Word Attack Test, El Paso Phonics Survey, and Dolch Sight Word Assessment. The data obtained through the clinical reading assessments drive classroom lessons and individualized instruction to aid in closing academic gaps. Reading fluency is greatly impacted by students' phonemic and phonological understanding. Once the teacher has accurately identified key gaps in the phonemic and phonological understanding, they are better able to instruct students based on those deficits so that they can become more fluent readers and thus become more successful in both reading and language arts content areas.

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

Given the diverse community in Miami-Dade County and the number of families who speak another language at home, STA teachers and staff implement a variety of strategies to assist ELL. These strategies include print-rich classrooms, direct instruction in vocabulary and reading, as well as the development of listening and speaking skills in English. Moreover, teachers use the Lexia® program to further individualize ELL students' language development thus helping them acquire fundamental reading, academic language and conversation skills in English. The program offers support in Spanish, Portuguese, and other languages, which helps students work independently and successfully in all levels of English language proficiency. In support of transient students from different Spanish-speaking countries, who enter the school midyear, the early intervention coach intervenes to support and assist the student(s) in acquiring the English language. In addition, St. Thomas offers a Spanish-speaking preK-2 class for students who enroll in school having spoken Spanish at home. The majority of ELL students at STA are Spanish speaking. In order to support the academic development of students' native language, STA provides all students with 180 minutes of Spanish instruction weekly.

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

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School's special populations include ESE, gifted/advanced, and ELL. Strategies and initiatives to support these students are described above.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

St. Thomas the Apostle’s administration, faculty, and staff are dedicated to working with and engaging student participation and success. Teachers integrate students’ interests and passions in their lessons, making teaching and learning more meaningful to students. Teachers develop understanding of complex tasks through teacher-lead activities and peer learning groups. Students are encouraged to participate in team building activities and projects, which promote leadership skills, friendly competition, meaningful conversations, and goal-oriented products.

St. Thomas the Apostle strives on educating the whole child, challenging all students to develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. In an effort to continue to expand students’ social and emotional development, STA adopted the Cloud 9® Character Development Program in 2013. The program encourages its students to become globally aware and empathetic citizens. This literacy-based program uses characters in storybooks as an age-appropriate vehicle to teach positive virtues and behaviors. The elementary program teaches core strengths, success skills, and civic values. In the middle school program, students take an introspective look, investigating each character strength through a decision-making lens. Overall, the program encourages students to strengthen character development and foster the capacity to make wise choices.

Students are further engaged in their learning through the constant communication between teachers, students, and parents. Student progress is effectively communicated with students and parents weekly. As a result, students are proactively empowered to be responsible for their educational success. Teachers coach students in organizational skills, structured routines, calendar management, and the overall understanding of time management. At the heart of all STA educators’ teaching philosophy is the fostering of an environment where students feel safe and heard, allowing them to express themselves in meaningful ways.

The award-winning theatre program provides students with the opportunity for individual growth, self-discovery and personal confidence as students immerse themselves in the theory, practice and overall achievement of performing on stage. Through this program, students develop tolerance, empathy, teamwork, and commitment as they transform into their acting roles. Nine years ago, STA’s drama coaches found themselves being approached by alumni who wanted to continue participating and assisting in the school’s drama productions. It was then the Junior Theatre Drama Team was assembled. This dedicated team of alumni and current students travel every year to Atlanta and compete among the nation’s best young actors.

STA educates students beyond the academic, artistic, athletic, and social development by focusing on the spiritual and emotional growth of students. Through the study and development of the Catholic faith and values, students develop a loving relationship with God through prayer, sacraments, and Liturgy. Additionally, STA students participate in spiritual retreats, which provide opportunities for purposeful, personal, and communal prayer and reflection. Overall, this faith-formation enhances and develops a school community that is rooted in love, trust, and compassion.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

St. Thomas the Apostle recognizes the importance of family and community engagement. STA teachers collaborate and invite parents to play active roles in their child’s academic and social development. Teachers use various modes of communication to ensure parents are aware of the academic instruction occurring in the classroom.

In particular, STA uses PlusPortals®, a web-based program, which allows administrators and teachers to instantly share data, such as student’s grades, news updates, calendars, and other features that foster engagement between faculty and families. Middle grade students are given their own account, allowing teachers to communicate assignments and progress in a secure environment. To further encourage parents to proactively monitor their child’s progress, teachers send home a weekly communication folder, which

includes students' graded assignments and pertinent school communication. Likewise, teachers have easy access to meet with parents via phone or an in-person conference. Additionally, STA teachers offer office hours before, during, and after school to help support any student in need. To further provide ample communication opportunities, the administration designates certain teacher conference days throughout the year to facilitate the ability to meet with parents.

In a more comprehensive view, STA's administration utilizes the services of Constant Contact®, an online marketing and communication tool, which facilitates easy and concise communication with all stakeholders. Using this program, the school community receives a weekly newsletter, "Tornado Talk", sharing the most up-to-date announcements and information to drive parent participation and awareness. Further, Constant Contact® generates a call list of all the school community members to effortlessly communicate in the case of an emergency or important announcement.

While STA welcomes and invites all parents and family members to be a strong presence in their child's educational journey, they recognize this effort cannot put students' safety and well-being in jeopardy. Therefore, all volunteers must be fingerprinted and agree to a background check. Once a volunteer is granted permission to actively participate in activities, they are registered with SignUp.com, an online managing and coordinating platform to assist in promoting and organizing all the ways the school community can participate and volunteer their services.

STA engages in a plethora of activities that are open to both the school and the local communities. Maintaining an active presence in social media, STA's website, Instagram, and Twitter accounts are updated regularly. To create unity and enhance the educational partnership, parent-teacher socials are hosted on a yearly basis. Moreover, opened to the community at large, STA hosts annual tournaments and festivals such as the golf and fishing tournaments and the Family Festival, which serve as both fundraisers and a way to unify the community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

STA's knowledgeable, experienced, hardworking, and compassionate teachers take classroom instruction and students' academic and social growth to another level of success. The dedication STA educators have toward their students, administration, and the community is reflected in the students and parents' positive outlook of the school.

STA's administration recognizes that excellence in teaching is constantly developing. In order to ensure STA's faculty and staff are up-to-date with educational research and best education practices, teachers participate in both school-based and district provided professional development trainings (PDT). Effective communication between administrators and teachers help facilitate and identify the PDT needs of the faculty and staff, therefore allowing the professional development team to offer and/or create relevant and effective trainings.

Teachers have participated in countless impactful trainings throughout the years. With the addition of new instructional materials, teachers have received professional development on the use of the resources, planning tools, formative and summative assessments, and technology-integration. Recently, teachers participated in a classroom management PDT. The goals of this presentation was to help teachers understand the components of behavior escalation, the role a teacher's attitude can play in escalating or de-escalating a student's behavior, and limit-setting strategies. On another occasion, teachers and staff participated in a PDT on social-emotional learning. Teachers were exposed to a plethora of knowledge on brain development and its contribution to learning; teachers were trained in Barbara Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build-theory, a model to help students be more productive based on maintaining a positive mind frame. The knowledge and training acquired by the teachers during these PDT's is evident in their teaching practices and the effective integration of these learned skills in the classroom. Finally, in order to ensure teachers remain effective over the years, the administration created a Professional Development Plan (PDP) in 2018. This five-year PDP details objectives, actions, timelines, and budgets to meet the teachers' professional development needs.

4. School Leadership:

The STA school administration is comprised of the Pastor, Principal, and Assistant Principal who collaborate and work closely with STA's leadership team to promote best practices. This team consists of the school counselor, special education coordinator, early childhood chairperson, elementary education chairperson and middle grade education chairperson, as well as the testing coordinator, STREAM coordinator, Safety-Enhancement Coordinator, and Technology chairperson. Fusing STA's mission and vision, the leadership philosophy is to present all students with a rigorous cross-curricular education, which exemplifies 21st century skills and promotes achievement and growth in students both academically and socially.

STA administrators work closely with parents, teachers, and community stakeholders. They promote an "open-door" policy to ensure the best interest of the student body. Further, they cultivate an environment of respect, which results in strong community engagement. To best serve STA's different populations and allow all stakeholders active participation in the decision-making process, various committees have been created. These committees enhance STA's environment and work towards the betterment of the school and its students. Such committees include The Home and School Board Committee, Consultative Board, Homeroom Mom and Dad Committee, and the Parish Financial Committee.

In recent years, STA's school leadership team has taken a more proactive approach to school safety. STA has designated a Safety Committee, led by the Safety-Enhancement Coordinator, to implement many safety enhancements. In particular, STA officials worked with the local police department to create an emergency operation protocol in coordination with the Miami-Dade Priority Response Team (PRT), a specially trained team equipped and readily available to assist in the case of a mass casualty. Teachers received training on effective responses to critical threats, created emergency plans, and were provided with a grab-and-go guide and emergency kit in the case of danger. Together with the socio-emotional instruction the school offers, teachers were extensively trained on threat assessment and prevention by the PRT.

Above all, STA's most pivotal priority is maintaining the safety of its children and community. Preventing such threats by cultivating a community where students' socio-emotional needs are closely monitored is imperative. Thus, STA fosters a nurturing culture where love, respect, and conscientious thinking of one another is at the forefront of character building and raising sound children.

In summary, STA's administration recognizes its success lies not in its own ability but together with the team they have created. Teachers, parents, students, community members and administration work together towards a shared goal: To foster and raise a community of life-long learners, led by the Roman Catholic faith, who are developing into kind, compassionate, service-oriented, and global citizens. Every decision is made with this goal at its forefront.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Over the years, STA faculty, staff, alumni, and parishioners have diligently worked to provide a rigorous education that incorporates authentic hands-on learning and faith-based education to meet the needs of the whole child. Although STA is recognized for its students' stellar academic performance and effective teachers, it is most proud of the school community that has flourished and developed to what St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School and Parish is today. The spirit of love, compassion, unity, and teamwork, together with faith-driven actions inspire the school and parish community to come together for one common purpose: To foster and raise a community of life-long learners, led by the Roman Catholic faith, who are developing into kind, compassionate, service-oriented, and global citizens.

This beautiful community is unified by its faith. When St. Thomas first opened its doors in 1964, a small chapel was built on the 1st floor and 5 classrooms were built above it. Throughout the years, neighboring communities, parishioners and school members grew together and built upon STA's humble beginnings to create the special family St. Thomas the Apostle is today, which currently employs 16% of alumni teachers. Families support and seek the best for one another; they help one another grow and develop. Families share in moments of joy and help one another overcome sorrows. This is what sets apart the STA community from others; it is more than a community, it is a family that together raise kind and productive adults.

At the heart of the STA family is its love for God and its love for one another. These core values drive all members to acts of service within the local community and beyond. Instilling its foundation of faith-based service in the students of STA is a priority for both parents and teachers. Hence the reason STA invites students and its community members to live out their faith through action. To establish this virtuous mindset in its students, teachers and students together seek ways to help people on a local and global level.

For example, understanding and having lived through the effects of natural disasters, the STA community quickly responds to relief efforts for populations affected by tragedies, actively involving and educating students in the process. On a local level, students develop and execute service projects to help alleviate the hardship of those who are sick, suffering, and/or in need of assistance. For instance, the National Junior Honor Society collects travel-sized toiletries to stuff into socks and deliver to the homeless population in Miami-Dade County. To offer support for the US military overseas, 6th grade students participate in Operation Kris Kringle. Spearheading a collection of card games, books, magazines, DVDs, toiletries, thermal socks, etc., students carefully fill care packages and send them to active military personnel during the holidays.

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is a special place. On a daily basis, great academic instruction occurs, teachers enhance student development, and parents actively participate in their children's education. However, the most instrumental practice to achieving and supporting student success is St. Thomas the Apostle's unifying community.

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? \$10194
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student? \$1829

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 6%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 42%