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CLASSICAL TIMES

A monthly newsletter for the parents and friends of St. Thomas More Academy



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Dear STMA Community...

As we embark upon the second quarter of this school year, and prepare for the “long winter,” as my children love to say, the faculty and staff have been reflecting upon how we can challenge ourselves and our students to grow, and what “challenge” means. We’ve come to the following conclusion: we challenge ourselves when we try to do something just a bit better than we did the last time – when there is a “stretch.” We stretch our capacities, we practice until the stretch becomes second nature, and then we are ready for a new challenge.

STMA’s curriculum is challenging insofar as there is an intrinsic order, or “ladder of learning,” to the Math and Language Arts components that guides the process of stretching, practicing, and stretching again. In Integrated Humanities, there is a wealth of beautiful material upon which the students can practice using their developing mental capacities by listening and reading carefully, asking good questions, combining ideas to form conclusions, and communicating these to others in an elegant way. But it is up to the artfulness of the teacher to help each student within a group find and practice his or her unique mental stretch that day. And the teachers must challenge themselves, or be challenged by their mentors, to continually become better at identifying where the particular challenge lies for each of their students, and motivating them to embrace it. Within the same classroom activity, (continued on page 2)

there is always both an intellectual and a moral challenge that the teacher must set before the students – can you understand this better, and can your effort to understand be motivated more and more by love?

The good news is that the teachers' work is easy insofar as the students want to be challenged, and they want to understand and to love. Human beings were made to desire growth. We were made to develop our minds and our hearts (at least until we reach the "eternal Sabbath rest" of Heaven!). As my sweet newborn reminds me, we are good and beloved by God first and foremost by simply being. At STMA, our teachers always aim to communicate this reality to our students. The students don't need to "earn" love or approval. At the same time, we find happiness in the journey of becoming the fullness of whom God created us to be. And we make this journey as we embrace challenge, properly understood.

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Margaret Freddoso
Interim Head of School



Community Intentions

For a successful Head of School Search and for our future Head of School.

For all our departed loved ones and benefactors.

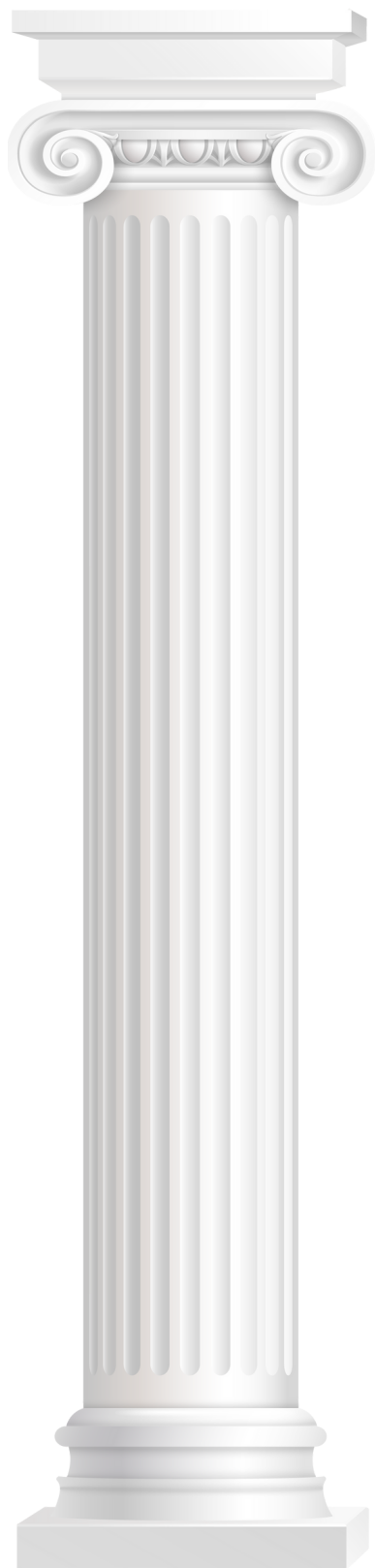
For all sick and hospitalized members of the STMA community.

For all priests and religious, especially those who preside at STMA daily school Masses: Fr. Bill, Fr. Jason, Fr. Chris, Fr. Aquinas, and Fr. Marty.



Three Pillars of Catholic Classical Education

Dr. Diana Philpott, Academic Dean



From the earliest days, St. Thomas More Academy has grown by word of mouth. For many of us, though, it can be daunting to try to describe Catholic classical education quickly and compellingly. Here below, I offer you the summary of points – a cheat sheet! – that I lean on when I find myself in conversation with someone for whom this ancient and time-honored education is a brand new idea.

Let us start by noting that education, any education, whether it be giving directions to a bus stop or learning to ride a bike or teaching quantum mechanics, is composed of three pillars: what is taught, how the teacher teaches it, and what the student acquires. These are known respectively as Content, Pedagogy, and Skills.

In the case of Catholic classical education, content can be summarized by those three oft-mentioned words: truth, goodness, and beauty. These are conveyed to students through stories, art, music, poetry, a well-taught math lesson, a nature walk . . . even how the classrooms and hallways are decorated. The goal of our content is to give our children a memory, to make sure they know their heritage, to enliven their imaginations, to help them see that they have a role to play in Salvation History, and to form in them a Catholic way of seeing the world that includes a lively awareness of the presence of God, the angels, and the saints. In short, we want our students to imbibe truth, goodness, and beauty because they form the soul and they point to Christ.

For pedagogy, the three key phrases are ladder of learning, mastery, and excellence. Whatever is being taught, whether it be math, music, grammar, etc., it has an inherent order to it. A master teacher knows this and leads the students through new skills, concepts, or ideas step by step on a ladder of learning. At every rung on the ladder, the master teacher gives students enough time to practice the material to the point of mastery, treating each mistake as a treasure that points the way to what needs to be understood better. The love of learning that we all want for our children comes from well-ordered thinking at each step, the satisfaction that mastering a concept gives, as well as the joy of then being able to work with that skill with excellence. What we are saying here is that there really is a Catholic way to teach. It is grounded on our understanding that the cosmos has order in it and that the human person has the capacity to reason.

The key words for skills for Catholic classical education – indeed all classical education – are the Liberal Arts (or tools, or skills), which are grouped into the Trivium and the Quadrivium. The skills of the Trivium concern word and language and those of the Quadrivium number and thing; what are familiarly referred to as “writing and ‘rithmetic.” The teaching of these Liberal Arts began in the 5th century B.C. in Ancient Greece with an astonishing amount of sophistication. It is through these Liberal Arts that students through the millennia have been given the tools to think clearly, read insightfully, speak eloquently, and write beautifully.

To learn more please check out the audio and video of Dr. Philpott's lecture series, *The Roots of Catholic Classical Education*, available on the Parent Formation page on the STMA website www.stthomasmoreacademy.org/parent-formation/.

Faculty Spotlight: Jerome Cole, Music

Jerome Cole is a founding teacher at St. Thomas More Academy and continues his work at the school this year guiding the implementation of the Ward Method of Music Instruction in grades k-6 and teaching counterpoint and music history in grades 7-11. He also directs the Boys and Girls Middle & Upper School Choirs. In addition to his work at STMA, Jerome is the director of sacred music at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Mishawaka, and founder of the Saint Hildegard Project. His passion lies in performing and teaching the sacred music treasury of the Church.



What role does music play in the STMA curriculum?

It's not just about knowing all the correct musical notation, but about being formed as a person. As one of the seven Liberal Arts, music has an integral place in the formation of all the children at the school. It's foundational to education in Western culture dating back to Plato and Aristotle. In *The Republic*, Plato writes, "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul." Nearly a millennium later, Boethius echoed this when he wrote that, "Music can both establish and destroy morality...no path is more open to the soul for the formation thereof than through the ears."

How is the Music Curriculum at STMA Structured?

The music curriculum starts with what's called the Ward Method for K-6. It's a singing-based curriculum with the purpose of forming their minds with right rhythm and harmony. This rhythm and harmony will hopefully be built into the way that their brains work from an early age because of all the music that they hear and all of the singing that they do themselves! Music theory starts to be sprinkled in throughout the elementary years and by 7th and 8th grades we start to teach music history and counterpoint. This involves the students actually writing pieces of music themselves. They will be writing counterpoint in a 16th century style. Actually writing the music by hand according to the rules that Palestrina himself used.



What was your musical education like as a child?

I started taking piano lessons when I was ten-years-old and then organ lessons when I was thirteen. My piano teacher was formative and held me to very high standards. In that sense, it became one of those things that I was good at because I enjoyed meeting those high standards and so I became better at it and it just snowballed. The lessons formed the core of my musical education along with the children's choir at my local parish. As a child I loved

going to Mass and signing the hymns and listening to the organist. I distinctly remember listening to the organist improvise during communion. Now I'm the one playing the organ at Mass!

Why did you start the Upper School Choirs?

I started the choirs because I saw a need for the upper school students to have an opportunity to sing together as a class. The choirs build unity and are a great outlet for them. There is a lot of talent with these kids and it's a lot of fun to work with them.

What is your favorite STMA experience so far?

Any time I hear the kids singing at Mass is a favorite experience. The All Saints Mass last year was particularly beautiful. So was Lessons & Carols. That was special because the kids rose to the challenge. It was a lot of fun for me to see and they had a lot of fun doing it.



Rounding Out the Curriculum: Friday Clubs

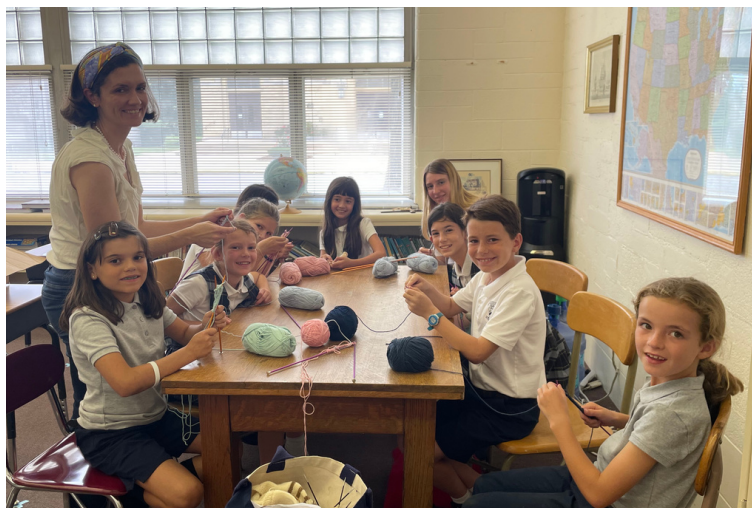
Joe Everett, Assistant Head of School & Athletic Director



One of the things I love most about our community is the way our parents are so bought in and active within all that we do. Whether it is volunteering to help with lunch and recess, coaching our sports teams after school, or simply attending daily Mass in the morning or participating in school-sponsored events and activities, our parents are the bedrock and lifeblood of STMA, which, from a Catholic perspective, is how it ought to be. Parents are the primary educators of their children, and the school has been entrusted by the parents to engineer and facilitate the education of their children. It's a beautiful partnership when trust, care, and servant leadership (active love) are mutually offered from both sides -- an understanding that the school community and the school families are, to quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

Nothing has made this "network of mutuality" more apparent to me than our Friday Club Periods. Out of the eight wonderful clubs that we offer to students in 3rd grade through 11th, seven of them are led by school parents, who generously give of their time to share their gifts and loves, taking on the lead role of teaching within the classroom once a month for 45 minutes. It's a beautiful expression of what the aim of education is: the passing down of the things we love and the things we value — the things that we are passionate about and set our hearts on fire.

I am so grateful to our club leaders for not only taking charge and leading their own individual club, but more so for providing the opportunity for our students to continue gaining a fuller understanding of themselves and our world. Our Friday Club Period is a great rounding out of our curriculum. It is an avenue by which the school further brings each individual student to completeness, offering them the opportunity to realize and deepen what their natural loves are and how they can grow in them and share them with others. Our loves beget more love. Thank you, club leaders, for sharing your love with our students.



STMA parent Maggie Doran leads a session of Knitting/Craft Club.

Fall Semester Clubs



School Newspaper

Mrs. Appleman

Chinese Language
& Culture

Mrs. Chiang

Film Making 101

Mr. Reynolds

Knitting/Craft

Mrs. Doran

Drama Guild

Mr. Smith

Pro-Life

Mrs. Downey

Ballet

Maggie & Annie Harold

Computer
Programming

Mr. Richter



Virtue of the Month: Kindergarteners on Kindness



Gianna DeLorenzo

"Kindness is giving somebody some money. Giving money to the poor."



Avila Francisco

"Kindness is sharing something. Adah and I share a bunch at school."

"Unassuming kindness is the greatest virtue God recommends, so it should be practiced always and by everyone. Nothing has such an influence on our neighbors as treating them kindly."

St. Francis de Sales



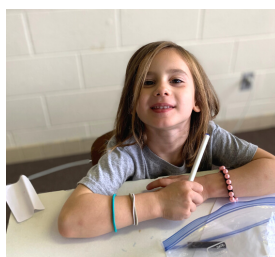
Isaac Schwenkler

"Kindness is not making sins. And also helping people. I help people at school by giving them food when they don't have desserts. "



Adah Storer

"Kindness is loving other people and being nice to them."



Stella Freddoso

"Kindness is letting someone else go first when I want to go first."

STMA All Saints Day Celebration

STMA students, faculty and staff marked the Feast of All Saints on November 1st with a special school Mass and an all-school celebration. Thank you to all the parent volunteers who helped to make the day fun and memorable.

All you holy men and women, pray for us!



STMA All Saints Day Celebration

