

St. Thomas School Board Meeting Minutes

Prayer and Opening Remarks – Fr. Steve

Fr. Steve opened with prayer and shared several exciting updates and reflections:

- **Mass Time Change:** The weekday Mass schedule has been adjusted — Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday Masses will now begin at 7:00 AM (previously 7:15 AM). This change allows Fr. Steve more time to greet parishioners, especially the children, as they arrive and depart.
- **Connection with Students:** Fr. Steve emphasized how important it is to be present for the children and to model the importance of Jesus in our daily lives.
- **Personal Message:** He expressed how proud and excited he is to be a part of the St. Thomas community.

Mission Moment – Accreditation Update (Suzi Furtwangler)

Suzi provided an overview of the upcoming accreditation cycle:

- **Clarifying Accreditation:** Accreditation is not a rating system. Rather, it provides a snapshot of where students are within the educational process — identifying areas of strength and opportunities for growth.
- **5-Year Cycle:** Every school in the diocese undergoes accreditation every five years. This year marks St. Thomas's fifth year in the cycle.
- **Evaluation Process:**
 1. A visiting team will conduct interviews with the priest, principal, selected teachers, parents, and board members.
 2. After gathering data and completing interviews, the team will provide a report with findings and recommendations to the principal.
 3. The next cycle begins the following year.
- **Standards Used:** The process follows the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NCEA), which focus on four key domains:
- **Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence, Operational Vitality**

Principal and School Report -

Review of Summer Principal Letter – Sent June 30

The principal's summer communication highlighted key updates, transitions, and outlooks for the upcoming school year at St. Thomas:

Positive Outlook & Opportunities

- New beginnings are seen as blessings and opportunities:
 - New priest brings fresh energy and leadership to the parish.
 - New preschool marks a major step forward for the school's future.
 - New staff join the team, and the departure of Betsy creates new opportunities to grow.
- Acknowledgement of challenges ahead, but long-term confidence in continued improvement and success.

Preschool & Enrollment

- Preschool enrollment is lower than initially projected.
 - Signage is not yet installed, which may be impacting visibility.
 - Personal tours and visits are crucial — people need to see the facility firsthand to understand its value.
- Enrollment down slightly, from 333 to 323 students.
 - P3, P4, and Kindergarten are full.
 - A few families have left — follow-up calls are planned to better understand their reasons for leaving.

Personnel & Infrastructure Updates

- Campus infrastructure looks excellent heading into the school year.
- New roles and staff additions:
 - Genovieve – Family Liaison
 - Erin Breede – Outreach Coordinator, focusing on raising St. Thomas's profile in the wider community
 - Katie Louis – New front office administrator (previously Anne's role)

- New hires in 4th Grade, Spanish, and ESS

Policy & Routine Changes

- Mass Schedule:
 - Students will now attend Mass once per week.
 - School Mass will be held on Fridays at 8:15 AM.
- Tardiness Policy: A new policy will be implemented to promote punctuality. (Expectation is for all kids to be on campus before 8:00AM, preschool is 8:05AM)

Board of Jurisdiction and STA Groups

- Ensure there's a good framework on how everything is working.
- Betsy will not be attending board meetings any longer but will continue to support remotely with updates to the foundation.
- Reviewed hierarchy of St. Thomas
- Sept 11 next board meeting

Partner Reports

- Finance Council –
- School Budget –
- Foundation –
- Boosters –
- Home and School –
 - - Our current officers for this school year are Sarah Pfennig, Anthony Giovanetti, Melissa Krolewski, and myself.
 - - We will be at Open House, welcoming families back and looking to recruit volunteers for the school year. We will particularly be looking for room parents and class party hosts.
 - - Jamie McCabe has been organizing school uniforms so they will be ready to be set out at Open House. Thank you, Jamie!
 - Working on calling all new families to welcome them/answer any questions, as well as matching them with mentor families for the year.

Committee/Organization Reports & Action Items

- Mission Effectiveness
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- Policy and Planning
 - A couple minor changes are coming through. New employee handbook - need to complete student handbook as well as student athlete handbook. Anthony has some policy updates that need to get in place.
- Buildings and Grounds
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- Committee on Directors
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- Development
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- Marketing – Working on branding - good start on style guide, will be done before accreditation. Upcoming year, want to work on communication styles and how to better this at St. Thomas.
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Administrator Briefing

Board Members Present:

Ryan Corcoran
Brian Hillary
David Shankin
Molly Kennedy
Jerimiah Sluggot
Fr. Steve
Jake Smith
Shannon Dickerson
Genevieve Boyle
Jamie McCabe

Absent:

Betsy Edgerton
James Wilson
Mary Vonck
Coleman Baar
Meredith Maczka
Ashley Emmerson
Michelle Anderson
Mark Fjelsted
Carla Grant

8/8/2025

Guest:

-Suzy Furtwangler