



Memorandum

To: Catholic Academy and Parish School Principals
From: Thomas Chadzutko, Ed.D.
Superintendent ~ Catholic School Support Services
Re: *St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy*
Date: February 26, 2021

The Diocese of Brooklyn has a long history of successfully educating students. Our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools continue the tradition of offering academic excellence in a Catholic faith-based community built on the tenets of our Catholic Church. In March 2020 things changed, the COVID-19 Pandemic forced many Catholic Academies and Parish Schools to hastily switch to online learning. We were challenged to continue our mission of Catholic education beyond our school buildings and deliver academic excellence and a faith-based community directly to the homes of our students and their families. Parents wanted a Catholic education from the safety of their home and so began the St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program in September 2020.

I am pleased to share with you that in August 2021, families will have the opportunity to participate in the Catholic online academy sponsored by the Office of the Superintendent ~ Catholic School Support Services, Diocese of Brooklyn. St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program will transition to a New York State Board of Regents recognized Catholic online academy, becoming the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy.

We are excited to partner with Catholic Virtual, an international online learning organization, providing our families with a quality online option starting September 2021. Dr. Stephen Haessler, a veteran educator, will continue to lead the online academy.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy is offering a full K-8 curriculum, including religion, with live and asynchronous instruction. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy, like all Catholic Academies and Parish Schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn, is part of the mission of the Catholic Church.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy engages parents and students, developing a vibrant learning community and sharing our Catholic faith tradition.

Catholic Identity:

Our Catholic Identity is essential to who we are as a school. “Be it known to all that Jesus Christ is the reason for this school, the seen but ever-present teacher in all its classes, the Model for its faculty, and the Inspiration for its students.”

The STACOA Way:

The core mission of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy, the STACOA Way, is our dedication to the Cross of Christ.

- ***In the name of the Father:*** STACOA will ***form students in the faith***. Every STACOA teacher in this regard is a religion teacher
- ***And of the Son:*** STACOA will ***communicate*** with all stakeholders. Education requires the exchange of effective, timely, and actionable information
- ***And of the Holy Spirit:*** STACOA will use the light of Christ to ***illuminate*** our redeemed creation through school subjects, much the way St. Thomas Aquinas, our patron saint, did in his time
- ***Amen:*** STACOA will ***evaluate*** so that benchmarks of real learning may be documented so that learners and their parents know concretely what students know and can do

Is St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy accredited and aligned to the standards?

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy is aligned to the New York State standards and the program offerings are through Catholic Virtual, accredited through Cognia. Cognia is a non-profit organization that accredits primary and secondary schools throughout the world.

Curriculum and Academics:

The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy curriculum is designed and delivered purposely for an online learning environment. Research has shown that online learning includes not only live instruction, but time allowed for independent learning, completing assignments, and engaging in group projects. Students will participate in over 10 hours of live instruction each week, with additional tutoring and needed support.

Faculty and Staff:

Dr. Stephen Haessler, a veteran educator, will continue to lead the online academy. Previously, Dr. Haessler was the Chief Academic Officer of the Arrupe Virtual Learning Institute for ten years. The Faculty is Catholic qualified, experienced Teachers in online instruction.

What is the daily schedule for a student in my child’s grade?

Schedules will be distributed at the beginning of the academic year.

How many students are typically in a class?

The average class size will be between 25 -35 students.

What are the attendance policies for live sessions?

Attendance policies will conform to New York State regulations. Attendance is taken when students are in session. It is expected that students attend live sessions.

Do students interact with each other during the live sessions?

Yes. Students interact with their peers in class, and group work is encouraged.

How much interaction will my child have with the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy Teacher?

STACOA emphasizes “connective instruction.” Students learn when they feel safe, motivated, and empowered. Interactions will occur every day and will be balanced with work time in between live sessions.

How active should a parent expect to be?

STACOA is your partner in raising your children in the faith. This is a Christ-centric online school. Parent involvement and support of the STACOA mission is of utmost importance. There will be abundant opportunities for parents to become involved in supporting our students and our teachers through various volunteer activities.

Will there be other opportunities for peer interaction other than the live sessions?

Yes. STACOA believes strongly in building social and academic connectedness among students. Throughout the year there will be numerous opportunities to participate in school-sponsored activities.

How will the students be assessed?

A variety of assessment methods will be integrated into every grade level and subject, including quizzes and tests, projects, portfolios, group projects, presentations, and standardized tests.

Will I be able to track my child’s progress?

This is a special advantage of the STACOA school. Parent/guardian accounts allow 24/7 access to monitor your child’s academic progress, featuring a direct communication link to your child’s teachers and administrators.

If my child is advanced will there be opportunities to move ahead?

Yes. We will help students achieve at their highest level at a pace that makes sense for them. As an advantage to being an online school, we can provide added support for our students and at the same time challenge our students to achieve their personal best.

If my child has an Individualized Education Service Plan (IESP) what is the process St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy will use to address learning accommodations?

If a child has an IEP or IESP and is accepted into STACOA, our teachers will provide the mandated accommodations. IEPs will be evaluated on an individual basis.

How will St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy address students who need extra help and are used to working with Resource teachers?

If a student is working currently with a service provider, STACOA will work with them to maintain academic support.

Will there be school supplies or other materials needed for St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy?

A comprehensive list of required materials will be available before school begins in the fall for each grade level and each middle school course. Device and system compatibility requirements will be available at the time of registration.

What are the technical requirements for St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Academy Online?

Parents will be responsible for providing their child a laptop or desktop computer with a reliable internet connection is essential for accessing STACOA online classes. A quiet corner of the house is also helpful.

The platform works with Apple and Windows and different browsers. For optimal performance, we recommend the following technical specs:

- Compatible Operating System
 - PC (Windows 7,10)
 - Mac (OS 10.7.5+)
- 4GB RAM
- Compatible Browsers
 - Chrome Browser (80+)
 - Firefox Browser (74+)
- High-Speed Internet (2Mbps+)
- Adobe Flash
- Adobe Acrobat Reader

What do I do if I experience a technical issue?

If it is a program or platform issue, you will be able to contact the Catholic Virtual Help Desk or STACOA Help Desk.

If you are having issues directly related to your device or internet connection, you will need to contact a technician or your internet service provider.

What are the tuition rates for St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Online Academy?

STACOA is a tuition-based school with no additional fees, beyond tuition and registration fee.

Registration Fee of \$ 100 per child.

Tuition

1 child	\$ 6,500
2 children	\$ 11,000
3 children	\$ 15,000
4 children	\$ 19,000

Are there opportunities for scholarships?

Yes. Scholarship Opportunities are available through the Futures in Education Foundation. More information will be distributed soon.

How do I register my child?

Registration Information will be forthcoming in a separate communication and discussed during the upcoming webinars.

Who do I contact for additional information?

For more information, you can call 718-965-7357 or email questions@stthomasaquinasbq.org.

Webinars to share more information are planned for March 10 and 11, 2021 at 7:00pm and you will receive an invitation to register in separate email.