



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Indiana State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Office of School Accountability, Indiana Department of Education  
**RE:** Accreditation Petition for Saint Thomas More Academy (STMA)  
**DATE:** June 2, 2021

This memorandum provides a summary of the information provided by the school in the petition and in any submitted revisions, as well as the Department's comments regarding the accreditation of STMA.

### **Background & Demographic Information**

Saint Thomas More Academy (STMA) is a kindergarten through fifth grade school located in South Bend. STMA intends to open a fully in-person school, serving the Michiana community. STMA currently does not hold accreditation with an accreditation provider but is affiliated with the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education.

STMA describes its mission and vision as "St. Thomas More Academy is a private, independent classical school in the Catholic tradition. It is in South Bend, Indiana, and presently serves students in grades K–5. The Academy was formed, and will be governed, by parents who are deeply committed to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation of their children. The Academy is committed to ensuring that this formation takes place in the context of solid Christian teaching and piety that is completely loyal to the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The Academy is also committed to offering this formation to qualified students from a wide range of social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds."

STMA intends to serve 45 students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade upon opening, but ultimately intends to expand to serve grades kindergarten through eighth grade, with a target student population of 126 students.

### **Operations**

**Facilities:** STMA currently operates in a building located at 308 S Scott St, South Bend, IN 46601. STMA has provided documentation verifying that the facility meets Department standards for student occupancy.

**Tuition:** STMA indicates that their annual tuition is \$6,500. STMA has indicated that if accredited, it intends to participate in the Indiana Choice Scholarship program.

**Staffing:** STMA's current Head of School is Dr. Margaret Freddoso, Ph.D. STMA currently employs three (3), one (1) of which currently hold a valid Indiana teaching license. STMA expressed that it intends to hire more teachers in the future and require that all applicants hold valid Indiana teaching licenses. STMA has provided assurances indicating it will utilize the services of an Indiana-licensed teacher to administer state assessments.

### **Academic Programming**

**Curriculum and Instruction:** STMA utilizes a wide variety of sources as its curriculum providers for nine (9) defined subjects, including "Faith and Virtues, Integrated Humanities, Language Arts, Latin and Greek, Mathematics, Science, Fine Arts, Recess/Gym, and Lunch/Free Reading." STMA has indicated that curriculum and associated materials are aligned



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to Indiana State Standards. STMA utilizes teacher-created assessments as the primary means to assess student growth and mastery in subject areas.

STMA has contracted with Jupiter Ed for its Student Information System (SIS). Jupiter Ed is Indiana Ed-Fi certified with Ed-Fi Data Standards, and STMA has indicated to the Department that it has capacity to produce and submit all required data reports to the state in an accurate and timely manner.

STMA describes its main instructional philosophy as “STMA’s classical liberal arts curriculum strives to impart mastery of the basic skills of math and literacy that are the foundation of further learning. Through an intensive course in integrated humanities, daily language arts instruction, and early introduction to Latin and Greek, STMA aims to equip students with the communicative tools necessary to read insightfully, think rigorously, write beautifully, and speak articulately. Meanwhile, education in mathematics and the natural sciences impart insight into the order of reality: math progresses from use of hands-on manipulables to conceptual understanding, while the science curriculum begins with exposure to the physical world and practice in disciplined observation of nature. Progress in meeting high academic standards will be supported by consistent mastery-based assessments and teacher-developed academic plans personalized for each student. STMA’s curriculum will adhere to Indiana Academic Standards. STMA will administer the ILEARN and IREAD assessments to Grades 3-5 annually. On each assessment, STMA aims to achieve a group median score that exceeds the median score for the state of Indiana.”

As part of the seeking accreditation processes, STMA submitted signed assurances agreeing to comply with all applicable legal standards and required processes for nonpublic schools as part of its provisional accreditation period and understands that its accreditation may be revoked if STMA fails to meet any or all legal requirements while holding provisional accreditation.

## **Department Comments**

- STMA submitted all its required materials on time and addressed any concerns the Department had regarding its initial petition for accreditation.

## **Department Recommendation:**

The Department recommends Saint Thomas More Academy’s petition for provisional accreditation be approved.