

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 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 Mr. Brian Wheeler

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

Official School Name St. Theresa Catholic School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4311 Small Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Austin State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78731-3634

County Travis

Telephone (512) 451-7105

Fax (512) 451-8808

Web site/URL <https://st-theresa.org/>

E-mail [bwheeler@st-theresa.org](mailto:bwheeler@st-theresa.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\* Mrs. Misty Poe

E-mail [misty-poe@austindiocese.org](mailto:misty-poe@austindiocese.org)

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Diocese of Austin

Tel. (512) 949-2497

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 Mr. Ramsey Abarca

(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, leave blank.*

## **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 2023 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.**

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	58
K	29
1	35
2	27
3	28
4	45
5	34
6	41
7	43
8	33
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	373

\*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
  - 1.4 % Asian
  - 0.5 % Black or African American
  - 18.9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 69.5 % White
  - 9.7 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 3%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	330
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
3 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 0 %  
Total number of students served 0

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>32</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 12 %  
Total number of students served: 43

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 2

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	8
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

12. 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 15:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	88%	82%	90%	92%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To develop all students to their full potential by educating them in a Catholic and academically excellent environment, preparing them to share God's love through a life of faith and service.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://st-theresa.org/admissions-1>

18. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

---

Located in Northwest Hills of Austin, Texas, St. Theresa Catholic School (STCS) is located on a 22 acre-campus surrounded by a greenbelt providing a healthy, safe, and beautiful place for children to grow and learn each day. Founded in 1986 with a total of 38 students, STCS has grown to support families from 31 zip codes, who seek the Catholic and academically excellent environment the school has to offer. The school is accredited by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishop's Education Department (TCCB ED). STCS is blessed to have Saint Theresa of Lisieux as the school's patroness, as she is an excellent model of love and service for students to emulate. Saint Theresa's "Little Way" of doing small things with great love is woven into every aspect of the school.

The STCS faculty averages over 17 years of teaching experience, with nine of thirty-three teachers holding advanced degrees (8 Master's and a Ph.D.). The school benefits immensely from the leadership of ten faculty members, who have 30 or more years of classroom experience. Eight faculty and two staff members have been employed at the school for a minimum of twelve years, adding stability and continuity to the school culture. Additionally, STCS teachers and students receive support from a robust administrative team that includes the principal, an assistant principal, a dean of students, a school counselor, two learning support specialists, a registrar, a certified school nurse, a director of technology, a director of admissions, a dean of development, and six classroom assistants for PreK-1st grade. The school has a 15:1 student-to-teacher ratio, allowing for a more personalized approach to teaching. STCS teachers feel called to provide students with the best Catholic education possible and prepare students to graduate with an optimal level of spiritual and academic growth along with a dedication to service.

Planning for the rigorous academic curriculum implemented by STCS teachers begins with the state standards, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and the Diocese of Austin standards for Religion; faculty members take pride in striving to exceed the TEKS. As a result, STCS has consistently scored in the top 15% of the nation on standardized tests since 2013. Additionally, high percentages of STCS graduates are regularly named to the honor rolls at local Catholic high schools and other prestigious Austin-area high schools. As alumni move to the college and university setting, The Little Way continues as a common thread in their character: living a life of faith and service to others.

Throughout its history, STCS has attracted a parent community of highly educated professionals, who are well-informed, and eager to share their time, talent, and economic resources to assist in the continual improvement of the school. STCS parents embrace the charism of The Little Way by volunteering thousands of hours yearly as coaches, club sponsors, library aides, school advisory board members, Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) event chairs, and committee members. STCS students witness this familial dedication and respond with the commitment to excel in academics, athletics, and spiritual formation. As an example of this success, grades 5-8 in 2021-2022 participated in extracurricular athletics and activities at a rate of 93%. Parent engagement in service projects and religious celebrations enriches the faith-life of the students. It is this partnership with STCS families that has led to STCS becoming one of the most respected schools in the Austin area.

All students receive an academically excellent education that includes Art, Music, Technology, Physical Education, Foreign Language, and Religion. Through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) labs students learn to code, experiment with robots, and create through maker space. A key focus of STEM is prioritizing digital citizenship; this focus on developing competent and safe technology practices teaches students to safely manage their internet and social media usage. The sudden onset of the pandemic in March 2020 created an immediate need for each STCS student to be allocated a school device (Chromebook or iPad). Through the expediency of Information Technology (IT) staff, the generosity of parents, and the patient support of the school community, a 1:1 student/device ratio was promptly achieved. In response, Swivl devices were introduced to enhance remote learning, Zoom subscriptions were provided to all faculty/staff members, and Promethean boards were installed in every classroom on campus.

In an effort to create an administrative presence during COVID, the implementation of the virtual daily Tiger News, hosted by the principal, entered homes via social media and Google Classroom. Tiger News



continues featuring school news, reciting the mission statement, “Fun Facts,” “Joke of the Day,” pledge of allegiance, and morning prayer. Students participate by sending in jokes and making periodic appearances on Tiger News to promote service projects and celebrate student achievements.

With a 92% retention rate and 106 new students this school year, STCS remains the fastest-growing school in the Diocese of Austin.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The STCS English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curriculum broadens students' minds by exposing them to a diverse selection of authors and genres. Within the ELAR curriculum, there is a strong focus on the writing process. As part of the vertical alignment for grammar acquisition and mastery, Simple Solutions is incorporated daily into all ELAR classes. Language Arts teachers set learning objectives to meet the TEKS and plan their lessons to exceed these objectives through enrichment activities.

In kindergarten through second grade, STCS students use Zaner Bloser's Superkids Reading Program, a balanced literacy curriculum. This program provides an engaging framework for young students. In addition to the Superkids Reading Program, second graders begin novel studies and Scholastic Storyworks Magazine enrichment. Intermediate students explore plays to enhance their reading and fluency skills. There is a focus on editing and composition as part of the writing process. Students write narratives, explore different styles of poetry, and examine differentiated book analysis. By reciting Shakespeare's sonnets, fourth-graders are introduced to the rich style of Shakespeare's writing and develop their oral language skills. Fifth graders reimagine classic poetry through tableaux projects using "Jabberwocky" by C.S. Lewis. Literature is studied from a variety of perspectives to promote critical thinking, and students are encouraged to explore texts independently as writers in middle school. Middle school ELAR incorporates writing/composition as a major component of study. This includes the process of daily journal writing, personal narratives, persuasive essays, literary and character analyses, and compare and contrast essays. As a culmination, students write an argumentative essay in 8th grade that advocates for the common good.

All ELAR classes incorporate direct instruction, essential questions, small group activities, student practice, and individual monitoring. Students participate in differentiated reading groups, centers, novel studies, and read-alouds. Lessons are designed to foster critical thinking. Formative assessments include exit tickets, journals, interactive responses, student conferences, pre-testing, and teacher observation. Summative assessments include chapter tests, quizzes, and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) outcomes. Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) testing scores and Renaissance STAR 360 Benchmark scores are analyzed after each testing administration (tri-yearly) in order to assess students' longitudinal growth in critical ELAR skills.

Technology continues to be a valuable classroom tool, enhancing curriculum and instruction. Amira, Lexia, Epic!, Seesaw, No Red Ink, and the use of Google Classroom are incorporated into ELAR classes. Online instructional tools enable teachers at STCS to customize ELAR lessons for students in every grade.

#### **1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The mathematics curriculum seeks to strike a balance between the exploration of conceptual ideas and practical algorithms and procedures. GO Math!, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH), is used from kindergarten through 8th grade pre-algebra to provide a vertically-aligned approach to concepts and a unified vocabulary. It was selected because of its strength in addressing the TEKS and its balance between physical resources and digital offerings. To maintain consistency, middle school algebra and geometry textbooks are also provided by HMH. All math teachers supplement these resources with a variety of other materials selected to meet the needs of students through differentiated instructional approaches.

At all levels, students are provided direct instruction and given the opportunity to explore and work through challenging problems. Strong foundations for computation are laid in the early grades and developed consistently over all grades. Teachers in elementary and intermediate grades make use of small flexible groups for reteaching and extension. Students are encouraged to collaborate with one another and seek teacher support when needed. Multiple solutions are accepted, and students are given opportunities to share their approaches.

Technology is used throughout grade levels for both instruction and support. Go Math! has extensive online offerings for both teaching and student work. Starfall is used in elementary grade levels to reinforce essential skills. First in Math is used in intermediate grades to provide differentiated computational games, coding, algebraic thinking puzzles, and problem-solving activities. Desmos activities are used in middle school to explore algebraic thinking and proportionality. The intermediate and middle schools use Google Classroom for organization and Forms for informal and formal assessments. Middle school uses Google Slides and Sheets for projects and units on data analysis.

As a result of formative assessments, small groups are formed for review and extension in elementary and intermediate grades. In middle school, formative assessments guide students and teachers to plan for support. All grade levels use activities and projects in addition to quizzes and tests to assess student understanding of the curriculum at the summative level. Quizzes in middle school can be corrected and resubmitted as part of the learning process. All grades utilize Renaissance STAR 360 Benchmark to track progress and growth while identifying students who need more support with specific concepts.

### **1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

STCS science teachers set learning objectives to meet and exceed the TEKS. PreK students develop foundational scientific skills and knowledge through an inquiry-based learning approach utilizing centers. Students observe, experiment, create, construct, classify, compare and question while exploring a variety of curricular units. Kindergarten through 3rd grade utilizes Nancy Larson Science, a hands-on, explorative science curriculum. Students are introduced to life, earth, and physical sciences through direct instruction, essential questions, small group instruction, and hands-on practice.

STEMscopes curriculum, introduced in 4th and 5th grade, expands inquiry-based learning by introducing experimental design and engineering processes. The students learn to ask critical questions and develop informed responses through investigation and discovery. Students are also introduced to coding concepts and model creation through the use of 3D printing. Formative assessment tools include exit tickets, journals, whiteboard responses, interactive responses, conferences, and teacher observation. Teachers use NWEA Map Growth to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide differentiated instruction.

Middle school science emphasizes an inquiry-based, interactive learning model by investigating, experimenting, creating, and engineering. Students discover the world around them through a student-centered, multisensory approach. Sixth grade students engineer a Rube Goldberg Machine to explain energy transformations and rockets. Seventh grade students create a 3-D model of cells and photosynthesis to explain these processes. Eighth grade students create a 3D model of an atom, design and create chemically propelled cars, and construct informative presentations of real-world issues such as the environmental concerns and endangered species. Formative and summative assessments include teacher observations of lab performance and reports, class discussions, hands-on activities, unit tests, and project presentations. Students in middle school take midterms and semester exams to assess their cumulative understanding of concepts.

### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

In Social Studies, students develop critical thinking and reasoning skills that will enable them to engage as American citizens and continually work for the common good. Social Studies instruction follows the TEKS and is enhanced through content-based field trips, current event study, and an awareness of individual social responsibility. Through the use of technology, students are introduced to the lives of children around the world. Teachers utilize the formative tools of exit tickets, journals, whiteboard responses, interactive responses, conferencing, and their own observations of student understanding. From PreK through 5th grade, geography, culture, and historical terms and figures are introduced. Students in the intermediate grades use these skills to analyze the world through a Christian lens to understand and evaluate the role humans play in shaping the modern world. With this foundation in place, middle school students practice independent analysis and higher-order thinking through flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and oral/written communication.

Elementary classes introduce history at world, country, state, and community levels. Kindergarten engages in an overview of world events, holidays, and impactful people. Utilizing the building blocks from the previous year's study, first and second grade students are able to deepen their connections and understanding of American and world history.

Throughout intermediate classes, performance-based assessments and hands-on projects are emphasized, as well as differentiation through collaborative grouping. Third grade students learn about the Founding Fathers' values through project-based learning. Fourth grade students gain a deeper understanding of the state's history and current events by visiting the Texas capital and exploring the Alamo; an informative, student-led musical performance culminates the study of Texas History. Fifth grade students gain an appreciation for America's history by exploring and analyzing the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other founding documents of the nation.

Middle school builds on these strong foundations to help students become articulate critical thinkers. Sixth grade students are introduced to a content-rich geography curriculum, culture, and global history. Seventh grade students expand their understanding of Texas history and examine the complexities of present-day political events. Eighth grade students demonstrate higher-order thinking and reasoning skills by writing essays and completing projects centered on United States History. Annual field trips to the missions of Texas and the nation's capital enhance the classroom experience for middle school students.

#### **1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

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

Known as "The Little Flower Catholic Academy," STCS's PreK is a play-based learning program that provides opportunities for age-appropriate cognitive, social, and behavioral development. Academic procedures and daily routines prepare the PreK students for the successful transition into the elementary classroom environment. The children participate in learning activities every day that help them become joyful, independent learners.

The early literacy curriculum addresses phonemic awareness, pre-writing skills, rhyming, sequencing, and word families. PreK math skills introduce number concepts, number recognition, creating sets, geometry, patterning, ordinal numbers, and number formation. The PreK program also offers supplemental academic programs to address differences in student learning styles, maturity, and developmental needs. Each child has access to an iPad to enhance learning, promote academic skills, and provide technology experience.

Curricular enrichment includes weekly classes in Art, Music, PE, Spanish, Technology, and Library. Field trips, special guests, and school celebrations enhance the curriculum and build community. The STCS Tiger Buddy Program allows PreK students to pair with older students for Mass and special activities. The learning specialist provides content mastery for students needing individualized instruction.

The heart of the Little Flower Catholic Academy is daily religion instruction and weekly Mass participation. Religious instruction is enriched by using Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a reflective and experiential curriculum that supports each child in forming a relationship with God. Godly Play, a story-based presentation of scripture, introduces the students to fundamental doctrines in a narrative format that encourage realization and personalization of Scriptural Truths.

Quarterly assessments and report cards along with semiannual conferences provide parents with informative feedback about their child's academic, social, and behavioral development. The daily practices, combined with the dedication and support of the Catholic community of faculty, staff, and parents partnering together, provide the foundation for the Little Flower Catholic Academy's role in the fulfillment of the STCS mission.

#### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

## **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

PreK-8th grade students experience a broad range of media, techniques, and culture through visual art. Students are encouraged to pursue their creative inspirations while building their skills and ability using a variety of tools, media, and subject matter. Art classes study the works of artists and explore a variety of cultures and eras. Student artwork is on display in the lower and upper grade buildings to recognize exemplary student art, promote student confidence, and invite community members to enjoy.

Music class provides students with the opportunity to meet their age-specific needs, such as singing, instrumental exploration, music theory, musicology, and social-emotional learning. Preschool introduces an experiential, tactical approach to learning music. Elementary and Middle school students participate in a personalized and differentiated adaptation of the auditory-identification-based national Music Memory curriculum. The units focus on particular composers and their most famous compositions; additionally, students learn about countries, languages, and cultures associated with each composer and focus on how this information is applicable to their daily lives. All students perform annually in the school-wide Christmas Pageant and other grade-level music performances.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Physical Education (PE) teaches the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship, and a fit and healthy lifestyle through organizational games, fitness tests, basic health concepts, and sports. The primary goal of PE class is to instill habits of movement that students can continue throughout their daily lives. All PE curriculum at STCS utilizes the TEKS as a guide for age-appropriate and vertically aligned physical education concepts throughout each student's STCS educational career. Preschool and elementary students participate in low-organizational games, locomotor movements, basic health concepts, lead-up games to sports, and practice skills related to physical fitness testing components. Intermediate students play organizational games, demonstrate calisthenics, aerobic and anaerobic movements, participate in seasonal sports and games, and build their knowledge of health and wellness. Middle school classes incorporate the elements of health and wellness and encourage aerobic and anaerobic fitness. Thematic content for sports and games aligns with seasonal fall, winter, and spring sports.

Competitively, STCS is a member of the Capital Area Private and Parochial Schools (CAPPS) Athletic League. Students in upper elementary and middle school can participate in cheerleading, cross country, volleyball, flag football, track and field, basketball, soccer, golf, and tennis.

## **2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

The foreign language department offers Spanish to students at all grade levels and a Latin option in middle school. Both STCS Spanish teachers are native speakers, while the Latin teacher holds a degree in classical studies. Preschool students begin to learn vocabulary utilizing music, art, and movement. Elementary students expand upon this foundational vocabulary and learn writing, reading, reading comprehension, grammar, and phonetics. Students learn through age-differentiated activities, music and movement, painting and other visual arts, and theatrical Spanish readings of familiar literature.

Sixth graders are provided the opportunity to explore Spanish and Latin for one semester each. At the end of 6th grade, students choose a language path (Spanish or Latin) for the remainder of their middle school years. Middle school Spanish focuses on increasing vocabulary and reading comprehension, practicing writing, improving grammar and phonetics, and conversation and listening skills. Middle school Latin courses introduce the ancient Latin-speaking world and utilize the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to become confident and capable in the Latin language. Eighth grade students take the National Spanish or Latin Exam giving them the opportunity to receive credit in high school.

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

Technology classes provide students with lessons in fundamental computer skills including keyboarding, coding, and Google Applications (word processing, spreadsheets, presentation software, drawing). Digital citizenship lessons are taught at each grade level throughout the year. Technology class also includes Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STREAM) challenges that allow students to practice critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Favorite student activities include programming robots to accomplish a specific task and using Computer Assisted Design (CAD) software to create a 3D print. Another facet of the technology curriculum involves the maker space, where teamwork is encouraged through the use of everyday materials. All classrooms have new Promethean Boards and the student to device ratio is 1:1, with iPads for PreK and kindergarten and Chromebooks for 1st-8th grade.

The library is considered an extension of the classroom which nurtures the students' quest to become lifelong learners. The librarian collaborates with teachers across all grade levels and subject areas. The library collection and creative activities are key resources in promoting acts of kindness, diversity, inclusivity, and celebrating heritage. STCS library curriculum motivates all users to become critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and skilled curators of information. A memorial gift of \$100,000 funded a renovation of the library space in 2022.

## **2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

Faith instruction is the core of STCS's curriculum and community life. Weekly liturgical worship and daily prayer are essential elements of the religion curriculum and community life. The school prayer reinforces the "Little Way" of St. Theresa, which focuses on doing small acts of kindness as a means of authentic caring and service. In addition, students participate in seasonal festivities and services, spiritual retreats, and liturgical music practice. The teachings of the Catholic Church are integrated into the curriculum at all levels. Preschool students learn about liturgical seasons, biblical narratives, and building a relationship with God. Elementary students study the sacraments, saints, parables, and theological concepts. Middle school students participate in Socratic seminars to encourage deeper understanding, which is reflected in weekly essay responses. Students are taught to see the value in doing even the smallest things with great love; this love is carried out in a variety of ways, including community service. The Church's emphasis on social justice is addressed at all grade levels, ranging from discussions about inclusive recess behavior in younger grades to contemporary issues of morality and global citizenship in higher grade levels.

## **3. Academic Supports**

### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Students performing below grade level are supported by a variety of strategies. In grades PreK-1, students are guided in the classroom by the lead teacher and classroom assistant. This model supports smaller student-to-teacher ratios and the ability to group students for specific needs and remediation. Grades 2-8 offer classroom extension activities including Prodigy, Lexia literacy, small group, and individualized instruction. In grades 3-8, students are required to attend daily ZAP (Zeroes Are Preventable) Hall to complete late or missing work or receive additional guidance on concepts and assignments. Middle school students have biweekly study halls with access to core teachers for tutoring and the opportunity to meet with the learning specialist for remediation and instruction.

Students exhibiting below grade level skills may be referred to the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Student concerns are identified and a six week intervention program of classroom strategies is initiated. If needed, this is followed by weekly pull out classes with learning specialists for individual instruction. If significant progress is not shown, students may be referred for more definitive neuropsychological assessments.

Students identified with learning disabilities are serviced with a Student Accommodation Plan (SAP) which offers accommodations for educational needs. Learning specialists, classroom teachers, and administration meet with parents to review testing recommendations, accommodations, and student progress. An SAP includes detailed accommodations such as extended time on assessments, classroom environment and

assignment adaptations, alternative testing environments, and preferential seating. The SAP is shared with all teachers who instruct the student and are reviewed annually. Diagnostic testing is required to be updated every 3 years per Diocesan policy. SAP documents are regularly reviewed to ensure the current needs of the students are accommodated as quickly as possible. This includes an annual review at the outset of the school year and transition meetings at the beginning and end of the school year. As the needs of the student change, the SAP may be updated and revised.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Students at STCS who consistently exhibit mastery of grade-level concepts benefit from a variety of enrichment opportunities across the curriculum and grade levels. These activities include diverse resources, including the Private Schools Interscholastic Association (PSIA), Quiz Bowl, Extreme Math, Genius Hour, and the Diocesan-sponsored DeBusk Enrichment Center For Academically Talented Scholars (DECATS).

Starting in kindergarten, students are offered enrichment in math and language arts through independent research and presentations. First-grade students who excel in language arts are challenged by enrichment activities that include creative writing, advanced literature, and creating book presentations through Seesaw. Second grade students enhance their novel study by researching cross-curricular connections and designing class presentations. Intermediate level students are given the opportunity to explore higher-level novel themes, project-based learning activities, and differentiated small group instruction. In addition, intermediate students explore enrichment activities through the Genius Hour Language Arts Program, and those scoring in the 97th percentile on NWEA growth scores in math pursue individualized enrichment opportunities.

In middle school, students may advance their math instruction by one grade level, thus completing one of two advanced-level math tracks, earning high school credit in Algebra 1 and/or Geometry. In social studies, through flipped classrooms and self-directed projects, students are challenged to advance and enrich their skills. Students are encouraged to excel through extensive writing activities including document-based question essays, oral presentations, and student-led debates and discussions.

To enhance and accelerate learning, differentiation is essential; it is an integral part of the learning environment at STCS. Students in grades 1-8 are encouraged to participate in the PSIA academic competition. Students may participate in 67 academic contests that include math, science, language arts, speech, social studies, and fine arts. In the most recent year of competition, 54 STCS students competed at the PSIA District Competition. Of the 54 students, 48 advanced to the district level and 14 qualified for the PSIA state competition. STCS' commitment to academic excellence begins in the classroom and extends beyond the school.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

The academic development of all students, regardless of learning, social or behavioral challenges, remains at the core of STCS's mission. Students with learning disabilities are supported by school resources and personnel, as well as local education agencies and private services.

The student support team at STCS, which includes the principal, assistant principal, counselor, and two academic support specialists, views student achievement from several perspectives. These include social-emotional development, executive functioning, neurodiversity, medical considerations, and the impact of external factors, such as culture and post-pandemic effects on student classroom performance. The SAP is developed following the prescribed recommendations from individual diagnostic testing along with parent and teacher input.

Recognizing the importance of early intervention, faculty and staff are committed to ongoing dialogue with parents, counselors, and learning specialists to identify learning strengths and challenges. In addition, teachers offer increased classroom support while learning specialists provide individualized instruction both within the regular classroom and through pullout classes.

Parents meet with faculty and the support team to monitor student progress on a regular basis. If academic

progress is delayed, an educational evaluation to identify effective interventions is considered. Based on diagnostic data and best-practice recommendations, accommodations in the learning environment may be implemented. These may include the adjustment of the pace and delivery of instruction, additional instructional materials, and the use of adaptive technology to aid student success, among other strategies.

STCS allows families to fulfill student needs with the use of qualified private therapists working on campus. This may include employing a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT) for individualized intervention and to facilitate remedial instruction in reading and writing. Families may also secure the services of speech therapists, occupational therapists, and behavioral interventionists to meet with students on campus to support their needs. In addition, STCS is able to work with local independent school districts in facilitating access to proportional share services that are available to students. Whenever possible, special programs are provided by local independent school districts on STCS' campus, or students are given time to visit off-site support centers during the school day.

**3d. English Language Learners:**

**3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**



## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

The school motto, Learn - Serve - Believe, sets the foundation for the formation of the whole child at STCS. This begins the moment students arrive at school; they are greeted by faculty and staff in the morning car line with positivity and love to start their day with joy and purpose. They begin each day with a Tiger News broadcast recorded by the principal. This broadcast sets the tone for the day by anchoring all students in prayer, community, announcements, and a little bit of humor motivating them to be the best version of themselves.

STCS education is multidimensional. Students explore learning in ways that encourage curiosity and inquiry while being rewarded for making positive choices. The building blocks for learning at STCS begin and end with virtuous education. Students earn positive phone calls home for exhibiting excellent behavior and Little Way 'PAWS'-itivity Awards for demonstrating virtuous character. To help foster social and emotional growth in each student, the Tiger Buddy program pairs older and younger students for mentorship, reading sessions, and community service projects. Academic enrichment through PSIA, Quiz Bowl, and Extreme Math, as well as other after-school programs complement the high quality instruction that occurs during the school day. Students can participate in American Heritage Girls, drone club, tennis club, golf team, and seasonal sports. On average, over 90% of 5th-8th graders participate in competitive athletics, with an inclusive "no-cut policy."

Service is a hallmark of Catholic education and an integral part of STCS. By engaging in Service Life projects and related activities, students develop lifelong skills and a deep compassion for the needs of others. Students also take on leadership roles in Mass celebrations as altar servers, members of the choir, and lectors. As a graduation requirement, middle school students must complete 15 service hours.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

STCS focuses on a community approach to communications and engagement to connect faculty, staff, parents, and students. The school communicates weekly with the community through Tiger Times (school-wide e-newsletter), Principal Points (a personal correspondence from the principal), and individual class newsletters. STCS actively updates multiple social media pages and hosts Parent-Principal Coffees throughout the school year. Student, teacher, and parent testimonials are released periodically online to provide potential families with great insights into the STCS experience. Two-way communication is encouraged through bi-annual parent/teacher conferences and a timely response to parent emails. The school advisory board and parent subcommittees provide parents with additional opportunities to participate in the visioning process, set future goals for the school, and assist in implementing those goals.

STCS is a participating member of the Northwest Austin Civic Association. Local community events, such as the 4th of July parade and Neighborhood Night Out, showcase the supportive culture exhibited at STCS. The director of admissions represents the school at local preschool showcases. New families planning to attend in the fall are welcomed on campus during the annual summer Tiger Bash; over 200 families participated in the summer of 2021. The Trunk or Treat event in October provides a fun environment for forging new friendships. Catholic Schools Week is observed each January to celebrate the unique accomplishments of Catholic Education. This celebration begins at the St. Theresa Catholic Church Sunday masses, where eighth grade students speak to parishioners about their transformative school experience. During the 2021-2022 school year, STCS hosted four open houses and conducted over 100 individual family tours to introduce more families to the school community. Each year a Gala event is hosted, bringing together staff, families, members of the parish, and local businesses to contribute to the financial support of the school.

Community service is promoted at STCS through a variety of opportunities. Parents and teachers work together to benefit students through the Service Life Program. The parent-led Service Life Committee organizes activities enabling students to learn about needs in the community and witness how their service

can make a meaningful impact. Guest speakers from local philanthropic agencies educate students on the mission of their organizations and assist students with developing a plan to assist community needs. By partnering with organizations such as Catholic Charities, Caritas of Austin, Mobile Loaves and Fishes, and Foundation Communities, STCS helps bring to life its school motto: Learn - Serve - Believe.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Professional development opportunities are crucial to the growth and development of faculty members as educators. STCS provides ongoing catechetical training; faculty and staff attend a retreat prior to the start of classes each year, which creates an intentional break from present events in the world and instills a sense of peace. A minimum of 10 days throughout the calendar year are dedicated to professional development, which is planned and implemented at both the diocesan and school level. Teachers attend workshops that are aligned with grade-level needs and those designed to enrich their professional subject knowledge. Student achievement and needs are prioritized when selecting topics and courses of development. Teacher input and feedback provide insight into the specific needs of STCS and allow an opportunity to develop programs to address those needs directly. Professional development workshops include instructional technology, Social-Emotional Learning, Zones of Regulation, educational best practices, new curriculum, textbook instruction, literacy, and student assessment.

The professional culture at STCS is anchored by a loving and supportive community. The STCS faculty and staff enjoy consistently strong support from school families. Each month, teachers and staff receive an acknowledgment of appreciation from a school family as part of the secret pal program. This is coordinated by the active PTO who collect faculty favorites via survey at the beginning of each school year. The PTO often organizes meals for teachers and stocks the staff break room with these favorite snacks and beverages.

The Social Committee, composed of teachers, aims to boost morale by organizing celebrations such as baby and wedding showers, holiday and end of school year parties, spiritual bouquets upon the loss of a family member, and prayer blankets. The principal and assistant principal began the 2021-2022 school year with a generous appreciation gift to all faculty and staff members. In an effort to engage families in school life, the PTO actively supports the STCS faculty and staff.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The leadership philosophy of STCS is rooted in the belief that the School and Parish are one community, one Body of Christ, and thrive together through collaboration as unified disciples in Christ. The pastor entrusts the daily operation of the school to the principal. As the chief educational leader, the principal is responsible for leading the school community in the promotion of the mission of the school through a research-based, best practice model of education that both challenges and supports students to develop their unique abilities in a caring environment where they will flourish.

The principal and assistant principal engage stakeholders in the mission through the principle of shared leadership that fosters and improves communication, innovation, and implementation of educational, religious, and institutional goals. STCS teams are integral in providing guidance and assistance to the principal and assistant principal to meet these objectives. Among these are: the administrative team (school counselor, the registrar, admissions director, dean of advancement, and director of technology) maintains an institutional focus; the leadership team (tier team teacher representatives from PreK, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and essentials) collaborates on the development and revision of academic and disciplinary policy; tier teams provide a forum for fluid communication with the leadership team. Curricular teams are responsible for vertical and grade-level alignment of standards and curriculum adoption.

The pastor and principal benefit from the counsel of a school advisory board whose membership contains both parents of the school and non-parent members of the parish from a variety of professional fields. The purpose of the school advisory board is to advise the pastor and the principal on matters related to the operation of STCS. To fortify the “one community” culture, the principal serves as an ex-officio member of the parish finance council, meets with the pastoral council annually, and serves on the Parish Senior Leadership Team. The principal meets monthly with the parish evangelization and catechesis team to

coordinate the religious education program within the school. Additional guidance and advancement of the school mission happen through collaboration with the superintendent and the Office for Catholic Schools.

The respectful partnership between parents, faculty, and administration is essential for student academic success, spiritual growth, and social-emotional development. The PTO serves as the liaison for administration and parent community and provides a way for school families to support the teachers, administrative staff, and parish. Regular meetings with PTO leadership and school administrators ensure the flow of effective communication. The PTO president serves as an ex-officio member of the school advisory board.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Catholic values are based on the belief that life is sacred, respecting the dignity of all people. STCS promotes racial, economic, academic, and ideological differences as a human family. This ideology welcomes and embraces each new member of the community: students, families, and staff.

STCS became a Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) certified school in 2021 and has provided multiple students with I-20 Forms to support their Visa for studying in the US. International students enrolled at STCS enrich the student body with unique cultural experiences. The application process begins with meeting the needs of the international students. The admissions team, in conjunction with the parents or guardians, review screening results and discuss academic placement. Support strategies are integral and include RTI procedures, content mastery instruction, and a positive learning environment.

The growing diversity of the school community has led STCS to recognize varied cultural influences and awareness. As the student hispanic population continues to grow (currently 19%), the school has responded by hiring five bilingual staff members, including the principal and counselor. Annual celebrations to incorporate the growing cultural community include Dia de los Muertos, All Saints Day, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Chinese New Year, and a Native American Heritage performance.

Successful learning thrives in a positive and inclusive classroom environment. To encourage and support student engagement, teachers differentiate instruction for non-native English speakers. Students share familial experiences through celebrations, activities, and curricular units that highlight various cultures. The counselor reinforces inclusivity by providing lessons on the social-emotional nature of interpersonal interactions, communication, and perspective. Studying saints, musicians, artists, scientists, authors, and other historical figures from all over the world compliment a multicultural curriculum. The music classes study different countries each month, exploring culturally relevant music, musicians, art, dance, cuisine, and national history. Guest performers, including teachers from the ethnically diverse teaching staff, represent musical styles and instruments indicative of their respective cultures. Spanish and Latin classes enrich the foreign language curriculum with historical lessons and cultural celebrations. Social studies courses educate about world cultures and the equity of global resources. ELAR courses explore cultural diversity through literary content composed by ethnically diverse authors, both male and female.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

---

STCS believes that a community that lives out the charism of STCS's Little Way (love, kindness, and service) is transformational. Imparting this sense of community at STCS is the one essential practice that is most instrumental in the school's success. Belonging to a community connects one to something far greater than one's self. Common goals, shared hopes, and a positive vision for the future are fruits of a healthy community. The STCS community is imbued with a sense of belief and belonging. The highest levels of success are observed in student achievement, teacher excellence, and parent involvement through an emphasis on building a secure and welcoming Catholic school community.

Embracing the Christian faith and its commitment to the family as the first community are foundational. This truth begins as families are invited to become a part of the STCS family, and the school initiates a partnership in the education and faith formation of their children. STCS parents respond to this invitation with enthusiasm and engagement in the life of the school, transforming the school community into a second home for all.

Kindness is a hallmark of the Little Way that builds communal trust and confidence. STCS students see their parents and teachers as members of the same kind and loving community and understand their education has tremendous value. Every child in the care of STCS faculty and staff is a beloved child of God and belongs here. Students believe in themselves because they are keenly aware that the community believes in them. This fosters personal growth, faith formation, academic excellence, athletic participation, and artistic exploration. This community inspires STCS students to be courageous, confident, and compassionate in their daily lives, believing that they are loved and capable of reaching their true potential.

The Little Way provides the necessary light and guidance in the formation of community values and essential beliefs key to the school's success. We believe that a community practicing STCS's Little Way of love, kindness, and service transforms the hearts of each student, and inspires them to share their gifts and talents with a world in need of God's love.

"Do all that you do with love." -St. Theresa of Lisieux

## 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?      \$11866  
(School budget divided by enrollment)
4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$5668
5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to      7%  
scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?
6. What percentage of the student body receives      45%  
scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?

## PART VIII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS

---

*Non-public schools must report norm-referenced test (NRT) results in reading and mathematics for students tested in grades 3 and higher in the most recent administration of the test within the most recently completed school year (2021-2022)<sup>1</sup>. Each school must obtain grade level summary reports from the test publisher for students tested in reading and mathematics for each of these grades.*

These reports must include:

1. the number of students tested;
2. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for all students in each tested grade; and**
3. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for each sufficiently large subgroup<sup>2</sup> in each tested grade.**

Please make notations on these reports to explain results that represent fewer than 95 percent of the students enrolled at the time of testing (e.g., the number of students who took alternative assessments<sup>3</sup>).

A copy of these reports (in a PDF file) must be uploaded through the National Blue Ribbons Schools Portal.

Also, one hard copy of these reports must be submitted by mail to CAPE with two hard copies of this application.

---

<sup>1</sup> Because of school closings due to COVID-19, schools may use test results obtained in the fall or spring of 2019 or the fall of 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Possible subgroups are those identified in Items 4, 6, 7, and 8 in Part II of this application (racial/ethnic groups, ELL students, students eligible for free or reduced meals, and students receiving special education services). A sufficiently large subgroup is one that represents at least 10 percent of the school enrollment as reported in these items.

<sup>3</sup> Alternate assessments are used to evaluate the performance of students who are unable to participate in a school's norm-referenced test (NRT) even with accommodations. These assessments are based on the grade-level content covered by the NRT, but at reduced depth, breadth, and complexity. (adapted from National Center on Educational Outcomes)