

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School
Board Update – 2025 Fall / Winter Committee Report

As we step into the second quarter of the 2025–2026 school year, we are filled with gratitude for the energy, support, and spirit that make St. Thomas so special. With Thanksgiving just around the corner, the Board would like to extend our warmest wishes for a joyful holiday filled with rest, reflection, and time with loved ones.

*This fall has already been rich with milestones and moments that showcase the strength of our community. Our annual **Walk-A-Thon met its fundraising goal**, reflecting the incredible dedication of our families and students. We also just recently enjoyed another **fantastic Basketball Tournament**, where teamwork, sportsmanship, and school pride were on full display, building upon successful **golf, volleyball and cross country** seasons!*

*The HSA has truly outdone itself with both beloved traditions and exciting new additions. This year's **Trunk or Treat** brought creative energy and fantastic participation from parents and students, while **Family Bingo Night** is likely to become a community favorite with its lively atmosphere and all-ages fun. Most recently, we celebrated another **record-breaking turnout for Special Persons Day**, a powerful reminder of the deep connections that make our school feel like home. In addition, our **Veterans Day Ceremony, Kindness Initiatives**, and the ongoing **Pantry Project** continue to highlight the heart of our school—teaching students the impact of compassion, gratitude, and service to others.*

As we celebrate these successes, the Board and its committees remain hard at work behind the scenes. We wanted to take the time to share an update on the initiatives, goals, and ongoing efforts that will shape the months ahead.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has finalized the **2025–2026 school budget**, which has been approved by the Board and submitted to the Diocese of Bridgeport. The budget was developed using a careful, bottoms-up approach that incorporates historical performance, current trends, and planned initiatives for the coming year. Consistent with prior years, we are projecting a modest surplus along with a moderate level of planned cash outflows that reflect the substantial infrastructure investments we continue to make in our school. We have intentionally built

reserves to support these enhancements and are pleased to report that the school maintains a **strong cash position and a healthy balance sheet**.

Academic Committee

The Academic Committee is collaborating with the administration and faculty to deepen engagement with the data provided through the **iReady personalized learning platform**, using these insights to evaluate, refine, and enhance academic programming across grade levels. The Committee is also partnering closely with the Advancement Committee to pursue **grant funding** aimed at supporting several exciting supplemental academic initiatives that will further enrich student learning.

Members: Darcy Ronan (chair), Katherine Brennan (Fairfield Prep Appointee), Marissa Haddad, Fred Paulmann, Jeanine Pocoski, Tracy Strub

Advancement Committee

The Advancement Committee's primary mission is to **raise over \$225,000 annually** while also helping to identify and secure scholarship funding and additional grant opportunities that support our students and programs. Building on last year's momentum, the Committee is placing increased emphasis on strengthening engagement within our broader community in particular alumni, parent alumni, and special persons. In addition to spearheading **Special Persons Day**, the Committee is actively planning a series of community-building events for our alumni and parent alumni, including **Alumni Masses**, the **Holiday Soirée**, and the **Basketball Showcase**, as well as brainstorming a special January activity dedicated to our Special Persons. The **Wildcat Den** will return with two installments this year, continuing its role as a successful engagement initiative for all in our community. Finally, the Advancement Committee has officially launched our **Annual Appeal** campaign, which provides essential support to the school's operating budget and helps sustain programs that make our community thrive.

Members: Erin Russell (chair), John Gnibus, Sarah Nocerino (HSA), Rachel Pegnataro, Kat Powers, Erin Redgate, Kelly Scinto, Barbara Turner

Catholic Identity Committee

The Catholic Identity Committee has been working closely with the faculty on the rollout of several **kindness and service initiatives** this year. Mrs. Madrigal and

Mrs. Mooney have been leading a substantive and thoughtful effort in both areas, and there is much more to come. Planned activities include additional **grade-level service opportunities**, a dedicated **month focused on kindness and compassion**, a **national guest speaker**, and other initiatives designed to strengthen our students' understanding of faith in action. The Committee also continues to collaborate closely with the Parish on shared programs and community events, reinforcing the strong partnership that underpins our school's Catholic mission. *Members: Tracy Strub (chair), Christina Landon, Morgan Mooney, Darcy Ronan*

Facility / Technology Committee:

The Facility / Technology Committee completed its **Summer 2025 capital improvements**—as detailed in the Board's Back-to-School letter—and recently led a successful RFP process to assist the Parish with **snowplowing services** for the upcoming school year. The Committee is currently engaged in a comprehensive review of our school's **security posture** in partnership with **Atriade**, a leading school security firm. Atriade recently secured a multi-year, competitive security assessment contract with Fairfield University and has been hired by another K–8 school in the Diocese of Bridgeport. They were selected by the Board in mid-October after a competitive process based on their extensive knowledge of the Fairfield community, their growing presence within the Diocese, and their accessibility to the St. Thomas school community. Atriade's team has already been on-site gathering information, reviewing processes, and evaluating current investments. In the coming weeks, they will conduct both a **community survey** and **focus groups** to gather valuable input from parents, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. *Members: Greg Sargent (chair), Adam Fielding, Paul Landino, Jason Landon, Katie Scinto*

Marketing / Enrollment Committee

The Marketing / Enrollment Committee recently hosted one of our **most successful Fall Open Houses**, welcoming prospective families and showcasing the strength of our school. Building on the momentum from this year's website launch, the Committee has been proactively enhancing the site - conducting a **new photo shoot** and implementing a range of **Google Analytic tools** to better understand our markets, strengths, and opportunities for growth. The Committee is also expanding

engagement across additional channels to strengthen the school's presence in the broader community. This includes ongoing partnerships with **Wakeman** and the **Pequot Library**, among others, as well as exploring new avenues to increase visibility and better connect with families. *Members: Jen Anderson (chair), Kathleen Curran, Chris Gidez, Peter McSherry, Veronica Sarno, Christine Stafstrom (HSA), Barbara Turner*

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee has officially **kicked off the process to develop the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan**. This initial stage is focused on **information gathering**, beginning with focus groups in November and December with parent alumni, special persons, and alumni. Participation and feedback so far have been extraordinary, providing valuable insights to guide the planning process. In January, the committee will turn inward with **listening sessions** for current families, faculty, and other key stakeholders. Each member of the Strategic Planning Committee is also assigned to another Board committee, allowing them to **glean insights** from ongoing initiatives such as the upcoming Student Life survey, the June 2025 Diocesan Survey on Catholic Identity, and interviews with key constituents. While the work is just beginning, we are enthusiastic about **launching the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan** and ensuring it reflects the vision, needs, and priorities of the entire St. Thomas community. *Members: Paul Halas (chair), Matt Gombos, Betsy Kremiski, Pam Rausch, Erin Russell, Tracy Strub*

Student Life Committee

The Student Life Committee spent time this fall collaborating with the Sports Committee and is now broadening its focus to explore the full range of **student life opportunities** at St. Thomas. The Committee is currently developing a comprehensive **student life survey** that will help identify areas of strength, unmet needs, and new opportunities to enhance the overall student experience. This survey will also serve as a key input to the **strategic planning process** currently underway, ensuring that student voice and experience remain central to future planning. *Members: Fred Paulmann (chair), Adam Fielding, Chris Gidez, Kristen Landino (HSA), Ndidi Moses, Caroline Rice*