



July 30, 2025

It's getting to be that time again! While we're all sad to see the summer winding down, there's also excitement for a new year. We don't have many staff changes, but we do have a new social studies teacher. Mr. Jacob Domayer will be replacing Mr. Carlson in the social studies department. Mr. Domayer comes to us from St. Thomas More in Omaha and is eager to experience small town life! He will teach 6-12 social studies.

Now—on to the handbook! We haven't made too many changes from last year.

- Earlier in the year, we added a section on student privacy, the Archdiocese Restraint and Seclusion policy, and our policy on Dating Violence to our online version of the student handbook. These policies will be part of the printed version this year.
- We have made some necessary changes to our cell phone policy due to the passing of LB 140 on May 20, 2025. High school students will check in their phones each morning and collect them at the end of the day. Phones will no longer be allowed to be kept in lockers, as students are not allowed access to them at all during the school day. This also includes SMART Watches and other electronic communication devices—we ask that students not bring those to school at all. If students are found using a SMART watch (or similar device) during the school day, it will be confiscated. **For GS students**, it is preferred that students not bring their phones or other personal devices (if they have them) to school. However, if it's necessary that they do, they must check them into the office in the morning with Miss Patty and they may collect them after school.
- We've added a Parental Covenant to our handbook, and you can find this in the beginning pages. Please take some time to read the covenant before you sign the handbook agreement at the start of the year. The purpose of the covenant is, in essence, to serve as a commitment to work together to provide a holistic, faith-filled education for Catholic school students. It was approved by the St. Mary's Advisory Board at their April meeting for inclusion in our handbook.
- Our school uses **Flocknote** for immediate communication with families. Important announcements, including school cancellations or urgent updates, are sent through this platform. Please ensure your contact information is up to date to stay informed. To sign up for **Flocknote**, visit the SM website (stmarysoncill.org). On the left panel, choose '**Current Students**' and then click on '**Flocknote Sign Up**'.
- We implemented this last year, but as a reminder—on **Cardinal Pride days**, **students who wish to wear shorts must wear their uniform shorts**. This saves teachers and administration from having to police whether shorts are the appropriate length for school.
- You may have heard that our Mass day is moving to Fridays. **It is not**. We considered it, but we couldn't get it to work out with Northeast Community College and their Fridays at Northeast program, which some of our high school students participate in, so **Mass will stay on Wednesdays**, and **Cardinal Pride Days will remain on Fridays**. Two exceptions to this: Grandparents' Mass for the elementary celebration will be on Friday, September 12, and our Homecoming Week Mass will be on Friday, October 3. Both will be all-school Masses.
- With our sports season right around the corner, we want to remind our families of our handbook policies regarding athletic contests to avoid some of the problems we've had in the past:
 - Elementary students must be accompanied by a parent or a responsible adult when attending games or school events. If a parent is unable to attend, another trusted adult may supervise—however, high school students (including siblings, cousins, etc.) should not be considered the primary supervisors for younger children. Please do not leave your elementary-aged child unattended or drop them off at events without appropriate adult supervision.
 - Elementary students must sit either with their parents or in the designated student section during games. Those seated in the student section are expected to follow the directions of staff and administration supervising the area. Students who do not follow instructions will be required to rejoin their parents for the remainder of the event.

- If your child is not yet school-age (not in Kindergarten or older), they must sit with a parent—even if seated in the student section. This is primarily a safety concern, as younger children often have difficulty staying seated and may begin climbing on or playing under the bleachers on the stage, which can be dangerous.
- For the safety and supervision of all attendees, it is essential that everyone remain in designated areas—the gym or the Commons—during games and events. All other locations, including the second floor, Parish Hall, stairwells, the Grade School, and the connecting link, are off-limits.
- Please remember that school staff and administrators are present to help ensure a safe and enjoyable event for everyone, but they are not responsible for supervising individual children. We kindly ask that parents actively supervise their children during games and events. Your support helps create a positive experience for all families.
- A note about student parking: Fr. Starman has requested that we remind all of our students to park in the parking lot across the street from the high school. Street parking (on either side of the street) is not available on the days that there is a funeral. Also, when students leave for a sporting event on a Saturday morning, they should park in the parking lot, and not in the street. Street parking needs to be kept available for Mass on Saturday night.

Some updates to the work being done at school:

- At this time, we are still optimistic that we will have A/C to start the school year. Fr. Starman has assured me that the guys from Kayl will be working 7 days a week to make that happen.
- You may have noticed that two trees were removed from the front of the elementary school. Unfortunately, they had become a safety hazard and posed a risk to our building's roof.
- A committee is working on having playground turf installed on the area of the playground where we keep trying and failing to grow grass. The goal is to have this installed before school starts.
- While the explosion last year created many problems for the school buildings, we are slowly recovering. Due to ongoing construction and HVAC upgrades, and the 'mess' that results from all of that, the school campus may not look its best at the start of the year. It was always the goal to have the school 'back to normal' by August 18th, but as you know, sometimes there are unforeseen delays—especially in older buildings. We appreciate your patience as these important improvements are completed, and we're excited about the long-term benefits they'll bring to our schools.

We will have an Open House at both schools on Thursday, August 14 from 6:00-7:00 pm. This is an opportunity to bring your students and reacquaint them with their teachers and classmates. It's also a good time to bring some school supplies so the backpack isn't quite as heavy on the first day of school! Please pick up your family folder at the office when you arrive. There are some beginning of year forms to fill out that need to be returned on the first day.

School begins for students on August 18, which will be a 1:30 dismissal. School pictures will be taken on Monday, August 25.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the school office (402) 336-4455 and Miss Judy will help however she can, or send you on to me. We look forward to another amazing year at St. Mary's.

Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Pray for Us!



Paula Atkeson