



Midsummer Musings

Important Summer Information

Lower School Class Assignments will be mailed by teachers on August 18th. Note that in grades K through 5, there are two sections of each grade. In third, fourth, and fifth grades, students will change classes for one subject to be taught by the other teacher in that grade. That way the students will get to know both teachers in their grade. Important note: *Kindergarten parents MUST have immunization records in for the school nurse or you will risk the need to exclude your child. PA state law requires that childhood immunizations are recorded before the child may enter the school. The only acceptable substitute is a letter of religious or moral exemption.*

Addition of Pre-K Plus Our Preschool/Pre-K Programs are filled for T/Th mornings (3-year-olds) and M/W/F mornings and afternoons (4-year-olds). This leaves T/Th afternoons available for Pre-K Plus, which provide 2 afternoons of enrichment for any 4-year-olds whose parents desire a 5-day Pre-K experience. Space is limited to no more than 12 students. To express your desire to be part of that program, you should call the school office, where Mrs. DeMeo or Mrs. Januck will take your name and number and create a list for Pre-K Plus in the order in which calls are received. Mrs. Ciummo will then be in touch to confirm your spot in that T/Th afternoon program for 4-year-olds.

Bus information is sent directly by the school district, usually the week before school starts. Aquinas has no input into routes/times, and they vary based on location of Aquinas families in any given year. **IT IS SUPER IMPORTANT THAT LOWER SCHOOL STUDENTS ARRIVE AT SCHOOL ON THE FIRST DAY WITH THEIR BUS INFORMATION – both school district AND bus number for the afternoon!** Remember that we have thirteen bussing districts and not every district sends us their roster/route. It is up to the parents, not the school, to be sure that students know their district and bus number. I recommend taping it to the backpack of Kindergarteners and First Graders. We take great care to be sure that everybody gets home on the first day of school ☺, but that is much easier if we know how they are to get there!

Uniform Ordering and Information: All new families have received a copy of the uniform code by email earlier this summer. It is attached again for your reference. While uniform pieces may be purchased anywhere, they should meet the guidelines set forth in the uniform code. The plaids must be ordered through **Schoolbelles at 4721 B-125 McKnight Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237 (412) 630-8480** Aquinas is code #2229. (Orders can be placed online also at www.schoolbelles.com also.) Land's End is also able to provide the plain items, including high school skirts (although sweaters should be ordered through Schoolbelles only.) Parents should please be sure that students have the appropriate uniform pieces as uniform code will be enforced (particularly skirt length –

which is **to the top of the knee or longer**). The new quarter-zip may be ordered directly through school. Samples of the high school version are currently available in the high school conference room for sizing. Samples of the LS/MS quarter-zip (different style) will be available for sizing beginning on August 9th.

Note that for students in grades 1 through 10 the only acceptable shorts for gym class are Aquinas shorts. Shorts may be ordered through the office. They can also be ordered at Schoolbelles. All have the Aquinas Crusader logo on the leg of the short. Please be sure students have the correct gym shorts at the start of the year.

Our tradition is that *middle and high school boys will be permitted to wear a bow tie instead of the regular school tie on Wednesdays if they wish*. It can be any pattern of bowtie. This is in solidarity with our male faculty members who try to remember a weekly tradition of Bowtie Wednesdays! *Middle and high school girls may wear colorful socks on Wednesday!*

Family Directory Information: Note that once the Backpack portal is opened with this year's information, the family directory can be accessed or printed straight from the Backpack. If you set the toggle to Search for STUDENT, and leave all settings to ALL, then choose "Printable Version" at the bottom of the "Search Student/Parent Directory" page, you can access all of the information that families chose to allow for publication. I would suggest that you wait a couple weeks before printing so that all info is correct.

Speaking of Backpack: For those who are new, or for those who have really never accessed Backpack (Portal to Student Academic Information) to view current class grades, report cards, student schedules, etc., we will create an introductory video so that you can access all posted information pertaining to your child. That link will be sent in an email at the start of the school year. There is also a Parent App for the Backpack for phones. Not *all* information is available through the App, but students' schedules, marking period grades, AND the Family Directory can be accessed that way. That will be included in the video!

E-Communication Verification: We are able to send family emails through the email addresses that each family verified through the Backpack when they completed their enrollment for this year. That is the means by which this email has been sent. Oftentimes, emails are sent through a list-server, which is changing from "Aquinas Announce" through our school server to "Aquinas Families" through our Google for Education account. Sometimes, Flocknote will be used for email, but more often it will be used for text messages regarding snow delays, athletic schedule changes, etc. Enclosed in this mailing is a form where a family can list every email that you wish to receive the bi-weekly Footnotes, as well as cell phone numbers for a text about any closing/delay, or other timely information that we need to send home to families. Please complete and return the form, even if you opt to sign up for Flocknote yourself using the directions on the e-Communication form. Once we have gathered that information, we will "test" the list-server and Flocknote by specifying a day and time that you can expect an email. Until then, we will communicate via email through the backpack contact list as well.

Band is back! We are happy to announce that our Band Program is scheduled to resume this coming school year. Mrs. Sherry Traugh will return to provide lessons for woodwinds, brass, and percussion for grades 4 – 8, with a beginner band (grades 4, 5)

and advanced band (grades 6 – 8). We will also have our high school ensemble open to students who play an instrument. High School Band and Choir meet on Thursdays at 11:00 when all students are free to participate.

Summer Reading and Supplies: Summer Reading and Supply Lists are on the web site under the “My Aquinas” tab. High School does not have a supply list, as needs will depend on the student’s scheduled classes. One may presume a need for high school students to have several 3-subject notebooks, a few single-subject notebooks, pens, and pencils. Note that each student will receive an assignment notebook/planner when school begins.

High School Overnight Retreat: It has been our tradition in recent years to begin the school year with an overnight spiritual and team-building retreat for students in grades 9 – 12. The dates for the retreat, which is one of the favorite school year events for our students, are Thursday and Friday, September 9th and 10th. Students will bring their overnight gear to school with them on Thursday. We will depart in busses from the school, travel to Camp Allegheny in Stoystown, PA, and return by bus dismissal on Friday afternoon. More information will be coming; but often, older students need to request off from work for that Thursday evening. Please make these arrangements ahead of time so that all students are able to participate. Information and forms for high school students will be sent in the next couple weeks.

Graphing Calculators: All *students in math classes above the level of Algebra I* are required to have a Texas Instruments graphing calculator. This would include all high school students in Algebra II or Geometry and higher and any 8th grade student that will be in Geometry for the coming year. The required calculator is the **TI 84 Plus or TI 84 Plus CE**. Note that the CE model is rechargeable rather than battery operated. My experience is that a charge lasts almost a month! Either one of these calculators has all of the capabilities needed through Calculus. The cost varies from \$100 to \$130 and both are widely available at office supply stores and Wal-Mart, Target, etc. as well as through Amazon. Both are fully functional for the classroom. With 80+ identical calculators in the high school, *please be sure to use a non-removable means of identifying your calculator and its cover.*

Didache Bibles are required of *all 9th grade students* for use in their Religion Classes as well as for their personal reference and reading, and can be purchased in the main office. The Didache Bible is a version of the Ignatius Bible with commentaries inclusive of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Didache Bible costs \$40 and is hard cover. We find that the hard cover version holds up much better for use throughout the high school years.

Golden Children’s Bibles are required for all middle school students. As an initiative that began during the Year of Faith, we began having the middle school students become familiar with the stories of scripture. They have very much enjoyed reading the Bible in this format which makes it easier to follow the chronology of Biblical history. This Children’s Bible is available hardcopy in the front office for \$15 and may be purchased anytime this summer or at the start of the year.

2020-2021 School Calendar: The Academic calendar is online at the website under the 'My Aquinas' tab. It is the link that says "Annual Calendar". **Note that the first day of school is Monday, August 31st for Middle and High School, and Tuesday, September 7th for Lower School.**

Hot Lunch: Hot lunch may be ordered each morning at school if desired. Payment is made through a declining balance plan through *PaySchools Central*. Each student account may be "loaded" with a cash balance through the parent's credit card. The regular cost of lunch is \$3.75 for K – 5, \$4.50 for grades 6 – 12 per student. (Note that we are currently reviewing our lunch provider along with prices, but PaySchools will still hold the declining balance accounts.) A la carte items such as milk, salad, sandwich, chips, cookies, etc, are less. *As soon as new students are entered into the system, parents will be sent directions on how to establish a declining balance account through PaySchools.* Until that time, new students may pay with cash. The menu will be available online under the My Aquinas tab once it is published for the month.

Note that ALL TEXTBOOKS BORROWED OVER THE SUMMER MUST BE RETURNED BY FRIDAY, AUGUST 20th. THIS IS ESSENTIAL AS WE PREPARE BOOKS FOR STUDENT USE THIS YEAR.

The office is open from 9:00 to 3:00 Monday through Thursday if you need assistance or information.

Enjoy the last weeks of the summer!