

The Learning Community International



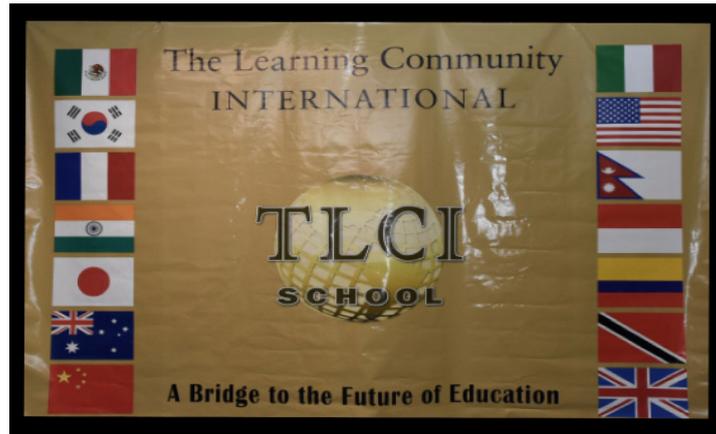
Graduation

Class of 2023

**Saturday
June 3, 2023**



The Learning Community International



Our Mission

Empowering individuals to reach their highest potential through a customized and collaborative process of reflection, self-evaluation and self-correction to achieve their educational goals.



Administration



Nancy De Luca Stempel
Executive Director



Manfred Smith
Principal Director



Romana Hughes
Director Academic Affairs



John Ghim
Associate Director,
East Asia



Jeanne Smith
Associate Director

TLCI is an accredited private school offering an educational alternative since 1984
Columbia, MD 21045
www.tlcischool.org

Graduation Celebration

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Manfred Smith
Principal Director

Romana Hughes
Director Academic Affairs

Graduate Reflections

Youvin Choi
Aidan Hale
Subin Jang
Dmitri Lawrence
Gaeun Lee
Seungyeop Lee
Caroline Moore
Gabriel Parker
Jai Rodriguez

International

John Ghim
Assoc. Director, East Asia

Closing

Nancy De Luca Stempel
Executive Director

Opening Remarks



Manfred Smith
Principal Director

Graduates, parents, family members, TLCI advisors and professionals. I'm Manfred Smith, TLCI Principal Director: Welcome to the 2023 graduation celebration honoring our accomplished young men and women!

Our mission is to provide every student the opportunity to become a full partner in their educational journey by encouraging and guiding them to discover hidden talents, interests, and for many, rekindling their motivation to learn and the excitement that accompanies success in achieving their goals.

This process of learner empowerment—to become more confident and make wise choices for one's success—is the engine that powers the accomplishments of our learners and graduates for over 40 years because it best prepares them for a future of accelerating change. A future where many jobs are disappearing in front of our eyes. But also, a future with many more challenging, interesting, and profitable jobs and opportunities. For some perspective, let me share a little about my early years.

I was born in Germany shortly after the war. The apartment my family lived in was one of the few buildings not destroyed during the war. There was electricity and running water, but no central heating, or gas to cook our food. That was done on a coal stove. Every so often, I would go to the basement to bring up a bag of coal. Two coal stoves warmed the apartment, but none in the bedrooms, which were bitter cold in the winter. Thick down covers kept us warm throughout the night. We had an ice box; emphasis on ICE. Block of ice kept the food cool. No TV, record players, phone, or a car, but we did have one radio. And no bathroom. The common toilet was two stories up and it did not flush.

You, our 2023 graduates, are matriculating into a world that has a thousand times more material goods, conveniences, and opportunities than I had when I graduated from high school. You will also face the challenges of rapid, ongoing change that was much slower when I graduated.

To effectively manage the challenges that will confront you, requires that you continue to practice and improve the critical self-empowerment skills you developed as a TLCI student:

- Self-reflection —to think deeply and systematically about one's learning and goals.
- Self-evaluation—to assess one's progress, successes, and failures.
- Self-correction—to identify negative outcomes and create a plan of action to correct or eliminate problems.

Whatever the path you have chosen, I encourage you to make the hard choices in your journey through life that will result in the success and happiness you will deserve—because in the end, you will not regret having made your own choices, nor will you regret the great things you have done, but you will regret the choices and opportunities you let slip by.

Congratulations graduates, and best wishes for always making the hard choices to achieve a life worth living.



Romana Hughes

Director Academic Affairs

Congratulations, TLCI class of 2023!

It is time to wish you well and say our goodbyes.

Graduation is a reflective time for the TLCI team. Our graduates leave us with the tools to be successful in college and life.

Defining success can be a challenge. It requires processing thoughts, actions, and behavior and understanding oneself.

TLCI has adopted author Skip Downing's Student Success Strategies.

The success strategies focus on personal responsibility, discovering self-motivation, mastering self-management, employing interdependence, gaining self-awareness, and developing emotional intelligence. These success strategies lead our learners to believe in themselves, use critical thinking, and value lifelong learning.

When meeting opportunities and obstacles, our graduates have learned tools and skills to make the best choice at those forks in the road to have their desired life.

I want to end my speech with a quote from Joyce Chapman, an author, visionary leader, and lifelong learner, writes, "The more we practice the habit of acting from a position of responsibility, the more effective we become as human beings and the more successful we become as managers of our lives."

Best of luck, and I hope to hear from you.



John Ghim
Associate Director,
East Asia

Greetings. I am John Ghim, the Associate Director of East Asia for The Learning Community International School.

Today is a day of joy, particularly for the graduating students and their parents. All the faculty and staff members of TLCI including myself are proud of the TLCI students who successfully completed their senior year. Congratulations to the class of 2023.

Many of you might be concerned about the next step in college. You are officially graduating not only from high school but also from adolescence and parents' protection. You must adapt to a different environment as an "adult." I understand this would not be easy since the first step is always the hardest. However, I am sure all of you will overcome adversities and grow further as responsible beings from what I have seen for the past few years. As you did well during high school, you will also succeed in college.

I am so proud and grateful for your efforts, time, and accomplishments in your curriculum and extracurricular activities over the years. On behalf of your new journey, I wish you the best of luck.

Congratulations on your graduation. God bless you.

Congratulations, Class of 2023!



Youvin Choi



Aidan Hale



Subin Jang



Dmitri Lawrence



Gaeun Lee



Seungyeop Lee



Caroline Leigh Moore



Gabriel Xavier Parker



Jai Rodriguez

Graduate Memory Pages



Youvin Choi

My name is You Vin Choi. I have long been a student of TLCI and proud to be TLCI 2023 graduate!

There are two things in this world that I want to send out my deepest gratitude for: my parents and art. You see, bone cancer has been an unfortunate part of my life. And, it would have been much more unbearable for me if it weren't for my parents and art, especially the artist, Henri Matisse.

I cannot forget the day that I was standing at the gates of the Hangaram Art Museum of the Seoul Arts Center with my parents waiting to go see the Henri Matisse art exhibition. When I walked the exhibition floor filled with his paintings, I realized how important it was for me to stay positive and not lose hope in life.

I have been fortunate to grow up in a family who loved and cared for me. I enjoyed various educational opportunities and overcame the medical adversity I faced. But sometimes, I would forget all the good things in life and focus on the one bad thing that has happened to me. After reading about Henri Matisse and discussing with my parents the lives of many other artists that created masterpieces despite their hardships, I was able to learn the importance of maintaining an optimistic attitude. This is the most important experience and lesson that I wanted to share with my fellow graduates, parents, TLCI students, and friends.

TLCI has helped me in this quest for positivity. Being in a physical condition that made it difficult for me to attend school like I would in the past, TLCI provided me with a ray of hope of continuing my education. With TLCI, I was able to receive a quality high school education in an environment where I felt the most comfortable: home. Thus, I am grateful that TLCI has played an important part of my journey to college and to achieving a positive attitude toward life.

With a positive mindset, I am ready to move forward with the next chapter of my life and go to college. No matter what obstacles attempt to block my path, I will overcome them by doing my best to adapt to the new environment and always looking at the brighter side of things.

Congratulations TLCI graduates. I encourage you to always keep a positive attitude. You will be more successful and go farther in life!



Aidan Hale

Hello, my name is Aidan Hale. I am eighteen years old. I enrolled in The Learning Community International School (TLCI) in my junior year. I found learning in my previous school challenging. I have severe social anxiety, which makes me nervous in large groups of people. I was also diagnosed with ADHD as a child, which makes it difficult for me to stay focused.

My experience in TLCI school has helped me focus on improving my socializing with large groups of people and feel less anxiety. I worked with my advisor to create custom courses that engaged me outside the classroom through field trips and travel. During this experience, I began working on my social anxiety to become less anxious. Some of my custom courses were Norse Mythology, Bush Craft Survival and Herpetology.

After high school, I plan to take a gap year and work on a cruise ship. During my learner reflections, I learned how to get a job on a cruise ship. After my gap year, I would like to major in Biology and minor in Marine Biology.

As my final semester nears its end, I have reflected on how I managed to get this far. I want to give credit to the people who helped me. My mom has been very helpful as my parent-

teacher. Without her help and her assistance, I could not complete high school. I would like to thank my father for supporting my migration to homeschooling, I know it was not easy. I also want to thank my grandparents for working on my custom courses and choosing educational travel experiences for my brother and me.





Subin Jang

Hello! I'm Subin Jang, a graduate of TLCI. Looking back at my time in TLCI, my high school experience is full of memorable events comprising a mix of many emotions. There have been many laughs, bits of sadness and anger, and what seems like casual conversations with friends and teachers that I recall even to this day. It incorporates a blend of ups and downs, some tears, and sudden bursts of laughs and happiness

During my time with TLCI, I acquired diverse and in-depth academic knowledge that I otherwise wouldn't have gotten. The classes have introduced me to a distinctive way of learning by breaking the conservative norms in education like endless memorizing and monotonous tasks without much evaluation or critique. Through frequent group discussions and critiquing sessions, I have now grasped subject areas that I am genuinely interested in and continue to explore and test my limits.

I would also like to highlight how conversations with classmates in and out of the classroom contributed so highly to my overall high school experience. High school is a vibrant community full of pure bonds between students, as much as it is a learning institution. Getting tteokboki during lunch break, and complaining about how much homework we have definitely added a tint of color to the dull palette.

I would like to thank my parents, my teachers, and my classmates who made this period of my life so special. While high school has definitely been a fun ride, I can't wait to face my next stage in life. This fall, I plan to study Fine Arts at the Parsons School of Design in NYC. I'm very much looking forward to exploring the borough of Manhattan while I continue to explore my passions and strive toward my ambitions. The stirring sensation I've undergone, endured, and relished since 2019 will remain untouched.



Dmitri Lawrence

Hello Parents, students, advisors, and to all the TLCI community. My name is Dmitri Lawrence and I'm eighteen years old. I have had a very eventful high school career. I started in public school and then went to a private school, and after covid started, my parents switched me to The Learning Community International School (TLCI).

While I wanted to go to public school, the way TLCI is organized helped me with my last years of school.

I was able to customize my classes for student success. For physics, I incorporated my interest in skateboarding into my first year at TLCI. It made learning more interesting, and I liked building my ramp with my dad. For math, my courses were designed to meet my learning needs to ensure I would be successful. I had the option to attend classes in the summer in order for me to graduate early. Working one-on-one with my parent-teacher (my mom) helped me pay better attention and retain information.

I plan to attend Montgomery College, work in the Automotive Technician certificate program, and work at a garage as a mechanic.

My TLCI experience has prepared me for the working world I am entering by giving me tangible coping skills. I have learned to evaluate my thinking and develop strategies for success instead of feeling like a victim.

I congratulate all the graduates this year on their hard work and success.

Dmitri Lawrence





Gaeun Lee

Hello my name is Gaeun (Chloe) Lee and I am a senior in the graduating class of 2023 at TLCI.

I am a young artist who draws to collect information and paints to archive time. I practice art because it is a way for me to make sense of the world and people around me.

The TLCI experience for me was more than getting a high school education. I struggled substantially during my transition to South Korea after attending three years of junior boarding school in the United States which was during COVID19 period. A family issue added to the intensity of my mental and emotional collapse.

I was lucky to have discovered TLCI during this turbulent time. In most Korean high schools, conformity is strictly emphasized and extreme stress from peer competitions is unavoidable. I was not prepared to work in that school environment but I still wished to move forward with my life without taking breaks. TLCI was the perfect place for my high school education because I was able to continue my high school study while staying away from heavy peer pressure.

The Learning Community International provided a freedom to choose my own study areas like colleges do. Freedom comes with responsibility. Therefore, TLCI giving freedom to students to delve into their passionate study area is an amazing way for me to not only learn academic study but also become a responsible and independent individual.

I became more composed and happy. Being able to concentrate on subjects that I am passionate about such as visual art and art history allowed me to enjoy learning and getting back to a steady ground in life.

Because of the TLCI education, I am happy to tell you that I have been admitted to many great art schools in the United States with four year scholarships and am beyond proud of these accomplishments. I have been accepted to the five following colleges.

Parsons The New School awarded me \$64,000, Pratt Institute awarded me \$80,000, Savannah College of Art and Design awarded me \$58,000, School of Art Institute of Chicago \$40,000, and School of Visual Arts \$30,000.

Once again thank you TLCI for establishing such a wonderful education system for students like myself around the world. I would like to take these very experiences with me as I move to the next stage in my life. I will work hard to succeed in the years ahead to be a proud TLCI graduate.



Seungyeop Lee

Hello, my name is Seungyeop Lee. It's a great honor to share some of my thoughts with my fellow TLCI graduates.

Looking back at my educational journey, what made it unique and different was my ability to learn from my perseverance in the face of challenges.

When I first transferred to TLCI from a Korean high school, all class and coursework consisted was in English. Many assignments were new and difficult for me.

However, I did my best to overcome these challenges by studying hard and seeking help from mentors, friends, and family.

One of my memorable experiences is my achievement on the AP test. Even though AP chemistry was the most complex subject for me to study, I got 5 out of 5 on this test. I am proud of this achievement, and I believe all these successes were the result of my hard work, dedication, and strong will.

Throughout my journey, exploring new fields of study and learning about diverse perspectives was exciting. I have enjoyed studying computer science because it is my major. High schools in Korea generally do not provide computer classes but TLCI allowed me to study computers and other subjects needed to achieve my goals. Learning chemistry and other advanced subjects was interesting and important for me because they were helpful to move me toward my goal and develop skills and knowledge for my future career.

All of the lessons I have learned through my journey will take me toward pursuing my dream to become an expert in the field of computer science, and I am eager to experience and accomplish new things.

I am grateful for the support and inspiration I have received from my family, friends, and especially thanks to TLCI for giving me learning opportunities that I never would have found anywhere else.

Thank you.



Caroline Moore

Hello graduates, my advisor, friends, family, and faculty. My name is Caroline Moore.

I have been involved with TLCI even before my own schooling began, as my older brother, who has since graduated from TLCI, pursued an independent learning path as well. Kindergarten marked the beginning of my time as an official TLCI student, and I am proud to have maintained this status throughout the entirety of my educational journey thus far. Today, I plan to expand on what my time as a TLCI student has meant in terms of opportunities and experiences.

The freedom to pursue rigorous studies, as well as the time for exploration, allowed my education to enter realms not found in traditional school curriculum. On-site opportunities at the Museum of Natural History and the American Art Museum, as well programs at the National Zoo, demonstrate the impact the Smithsonian had on me, both as a student and as a person. These experiences were complemented with others, such as archeological digs at Jefferson Patterson Park. Together, these experiences allowed me to build a resume suitable for selection as a teen volunteer at the Orlando Science Center, followed by a mentor at the Brevard Zoo, in Melbourne, FL. These activities cultivated my curiosity and would not have been possible had I not been an independent learner.

During my junior, and now senior, year of high school, I dual-enrolled at the Florida Institute of Technology. So far at Florida Tech, I have been able to work towards the completion of my degree and take part in multiple research projects. Since my first semester at the school, I have been a member of a professional research group revolving around neotropical paleoecology. In Fall 2022, I joined a student-run research team investigating the astrobiological field of Martian-based horticulture and mycology.

As for the future, I will attend the Florida Institute of Technology full-time beginning this fall to study biomedical engineering and regenerative medicine, interests that were developed through my experiences as an independent learner. I want to thank my family and those at TLCI for making this possible. Specifically, I would like to thank my mom for creating an exceptional educational environment and providing me with the knowledge and creativity needed to succeed, my dad for “funding the operation” and his role as “principal”, and especially, Mrs. Maria Wilder, who has been an integral part of my educational journey since we first met at my brother’s academic review when I was only two years old. In my final words as a TLCI student, I would like to express how grateful I am to have been chosen as the recipient of the Barbara and Richard Klein Memorial Futures Award Scholarship, which I plan to utilize for the purchase of textbooks and the payment of lab fees.

Caroline Moore





Gabriel Parker

Hello, my name is Gabriel Parker.

I have been in TLCI since kindergarten.

I am thankful for the flexible and independent learning TLCI supports. My parents' decision to enroll me in TLCI School allowed me a deeper exploration of my interests and the chance to participate in the real world. The subjects that interested me the most are history, regenerative farming, and business. Traditional schooling would not have allowed the deep exploration I enjoyed as part of my educational journey, thankfully my parents and Mrs. Maria allowed me a unique Academic freedom to explore my interests and plan my future. With my parent's help, I was able to explore options in regenerative farming and business. When or if I attend college, I'll recall my experiences from TLCI and strive to motivate myself and respect others.

I want to take a moment to thank my friends and family who have helped and supported me on my journey. First, I would like to thank my father, William Parker whose mathematical skill and calmness helped me through the most challenging math problems. My mother, Elizabeth Parker, was able to help me find an answer for just about everything (Momma Google) with her help I was able to dive deeper into subjects that allowed me to increase my knowledge. My aunt Amanda Wolfe helped me with my early English and editing. A huge thank you to my great-grandmother Elizabeth McGinty for her wisdom and continuous support throughout my entire life, and finally, thank you to my TLCI Advisor, Mrs. Maria Wilder, who has been with me since kindergarten.

This support and guidance are why I am a proud member of the TLCI graduating Class of 2023. I am also very thankful to be the John Holt scholarship winner this year, I will be putting the money towards furthering my certifications and education at Cornell University. TLCI is the gift that keeps giving, and I can't wait to see where the skills and experiences gained takes me next. I am very thankful to be graduating high school this year. It has been an experience that will shape the rest of my life.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Gabriel Parker





Jai Rodriguez

Hi. My name is Jai Rodríguez, and I have been with TLCI since I was 12 years old. I intend to share with you the ups and downs of my high school journey, what I've learned, how I've grown, not just as a student but as a person, and my not-so-clear plans for the future.

However, before I get to all of that, I feel it's important to tell you how I even got into TLCI in the first place, as it has much to do with what I will say later. In case you don't know, the island of Puerto Rico was struck by two hurricanes, Irma and María, nearly six years ago. As a result, the island spent about a year dealing with a massive blackout, causing everyone who lived in it (my family included) to drastically change their ways of life until the problem was solved. My life was already going through a change before that since I had transferred to a new school, but the hurricanes are what

sealed the deal. For the next few months, my life underwent massive changes, such as spending nearly a whole year in South America and starting home-schooling with TLCI.

Due to these changes and other reasons, my circumstances improved, but somehow, it made me regress. Thanks to the fact that my schedule wasn't as rigid as it was before, I had more time to do my schoolwork, and I didn't have the dread of finishing a class before the 2-hour time limit was up, but I also turned it into a crutch of sorts since I developed a tendency to slack off, which would come back to haunt me to this day. My anxiety also worsened over time until it reached a tipping point two years ago. On the bright side, I have been working to overcome these struggles and have made massive improvements, but I will not deny that I have a slip-up every once in a while.

While dealing with those things, I've gained and developed new skills. Over the years, I've learned how to draw and play drums properly, play the guitar and bass, write creative literature, and do basic audio and video production. I can't even begin to state how some of these things have helped me deal with the struggles I mentioned earlier, and I genuinely believe I would not be where I am now without them.

Overall, everything I have talked about has helped me learn and practice emotional maturity, critical thinking, and patience, which I know I'll have to utilize more than once in the upcoming future. I probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn these essential things to the extent I have with TLCI, and I can't thank them enough for it. I would also like to thank my parents for assisting me almost every step of the way, and my advisor, Romana Hughes, for guiding me since day one. I should also apologize to Romana for having to tolerate my many hiccups along the way, such as all the overdue reflections, prompts, and assignments.

Now that school is almost over, then comes the big question many of us have to ask ourselves; what do I do now? If I'm being honest, I have zero clue what exactly I want to do since I want to achieve many things, and for the first time, I'm okay with that. All I know is that I want to do something that involves the skills mentioned earlier that I gained over the years and that I want to enjoy every step of the way, which is something all of my fellow graduates should keep in mind if they want to lead a life that isn't just fulfilling, but happy.

Thank you, and good luck!

Jai Rodriguez



Closing Remarks



Nancy De Luca Stempel
Executive Director

Congratulations to our 2023 high school graduates.

I'm Nancy De Luca Stempel, Executive Director of TLCI.

TLCI is unique in many ways. One way is that since 1984 we have been the only school offering learners the most significant flexibility in their academic pursuits while using the whole world as the classroom.

Each of our graduates has participated in the design of their unique Individualized Learning Plan. In addition, they've worked closely with their advisors, regularly sharing their thoughts, struggles, and successes throughout their high school years to remain aligned with their intentional short and long terms goals.

At today's graduation ceremony, as the practice has been for almost 40 years, the graduates shared their journeys and future plans as they stood before peers, friends, family, and our community at large. During today's ceremony, as I listened, like so many times before, to each of our graduates sharing their journeys and future dreams, I remembered how those ritual marks another example of TLCI's uniqueness.

Annie Brewster, assistant professor at Harvard Medical, is the founder of Health Story Collaborative. She believes success narratives can remind us how we were effective in goal achievement, thereby increasing self-esteem and motivating us to aim for success again.

At TLCI, we believe that empowering our learners to accept the responsibility of participating in designing their program of learning tailored to their needs, interests, and goals, results in awakening their personal awareness, their love of learning, and a belief in themselves.

Therefore, we remain committed to our mission to empowering learners with the tools and resources necessary to make these intentional wise choices about learning, and ultimately their lifelong success. TLCI is a way of learning; and a way of life.

Thank you, graduates, for inspiring us by sharing your dreams for the future. Because Your dream of today can become your reality of tomorrow.

In closing, I must refer to Romy's quote from Joyce Chapman. The more we practice the habit of acting from a position of responsibility, the more effective we become as human beings and the more successful we become as managers of our lives.

I'd like to leave you with another Joyce Chapman quote: Dear graduates.... If your dream is a big dream, and if you want your life to work on the high level that you say you do, there's no way around doing the work it takes to get you there.

Congratulations It is my pleasure in wishing you much success in all your future endeavors.

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