

# *The Learning Community International*



**Graduation**

**Class of 2024**

**Saturday  
June 1, 2024**



# 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](http://www.tlcischool.org)

# Graduation Celebration

## Welcome and Opening Remarks

Manfred Smith  
Principal Director

Romana Hughes  
Director Academic Affairs

John Ghim  
Assoc. Director, East Asia

## Graduates

Shane William Cox  
Gopinath Harris  
Ethan Donald Dimas Hough  
Riwon Jang  
Paul Andrew Yuen Murphy  
Ashley-Yerim Song  
Sean Nathaneal Su  
Junseo Yoon

## Closing

Nancy De Luca Stempel  
Executive Director

## Opening Remarks



**Manfred Smith**  
**Principal Director**

I'm Manfred Smith, Principal Director of The Learning Community International. Welcome to the 2024 Graduation celebration honoring these fine, accomplished young men and women.

When I graduated from high school 60 years ago, there were only a few choices for a graduate: go to work, join the military, or go to college.

Today we live in a rapidly expanding global economy that seeks individuals who are far more than the sum of their schooling. There is a high demand for men and women who can think critically, who can tackle complex challenges, and who can communicate effectively.

Especially in demand are individuals who know how to DO things, to make things happen; self-starters who can build things from the ground up. Leaders who know how to take initiative and get things done. And, especially, individuals who are very comfortable with rapid change, for we live in an age of accelerating change. In short, the world is looking for young men & women just like our graduates today.

TLCI's mission since our first day 40 years ago has been to empower learners to reach their highest potential. We offer each of them the opportunity to choose a fully customized education conducted through a collaborative process that includes self-reflection, self-evaluation, and self-correction. Advisors guide the learner to exercise increasing control of their learning program to ensure that it is fully aligned with the learner's needs, interests, and goals.

There will be many challenges and bumps in the road, but the future welcomes our graduates with open arms, and my wish for each graduate today, is to forge a life that is worthy of you — because in the end, you will not regret that you 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.

The Learning Community International is not just another school; it is a way of learning; a way of life; a true educational alternative.

Congratulations graduates. Make yours a future that is successful, productive, and happy.



**Romana Hughes**  
**Director Academic Affairs**

Hello, I am Romana Hughes, and I am the Director of Faculty Affairs for the Learning Community International School. I wanted to talk to you today, we are talking about the connections we (TLCI) have with our families and students.

We start building connections right away. When we start building the individual learning plan with our families, we consider our students' particular hobbies and interests, which allows TLCI to build a curriculum that keeps the students motivated to learn. One example is the Industrial Revolution and Star Wars. You may want to create a course on the Industrial Revolution and how the Industrial Revolution changed weaponry during World War I and World War II, and then the student

can do a compare and contrast research project, looking at the weapons from World War I and World War II, and how the Industrial Revolution impacted the design and changes of weapons, aligning them with the ones used in Star Wars movies. In this example, we would incorporate English writing and world history as one class to learn, research, and write.

The main piece about The Learning Community International School is our community and relationships with families, the students, the parents, and siblings to understand the past information about the student's school experience and current learning processes. We create teams that work together, such as teachers, tutors, and special education specialists, to help design and provide tools for the student to build skills for success. Those teams and families are the pieces that make The Learning Community International School wonderful. Communication and connection are critical.

One way communication occurs is through parent-teacher reflection, regardless of the student's grade. Student reflections often start in 4th grade, when TLCI begins asking students questions about what made them smile that week to define what a friend is. Reflections teach the parent-teacher and student to think about who they are. As students attend middle school, the reflections dive deeper and discuss items like active listening, studying, getting along with people, and taking notes.

In high school, student reflections focus on success strategies for college and life. The students begin using common success strategy language, such as employing interdependence, The Wise Choice Process, Growth vs. Fixed Mindset, victim vs. creator language, and the fork in the road, to name a few. Students also begin self-assessments of their work. The fork in the road helps students reflect on their choices and develop skills to help them avoid repeating choices that can take them off course. Parents often benefit from the success skills as well. TLCI is unique and wonderful for our students.

Some students enroll with TLCI after experiencing a negative experience with traditional school or just not believing in themselves. Being an advisor and watching our students grow allows me to identify those moments where the student may write, "I realize when I'm writing this reflection that I'm using a fixed mindset." That's a win for the students, the family, and TLCI because they're applying what they've learned and moving forward. Fortunately, I have built relationships with families over the years, and I am still close to connected with them.

Congratulations, graduates. For new and future families, welcome. I look forward to meeting you. Those students are still striving through high school or elementary school, and we look forward to seeing you next year. Thank you, and congratulations to all of our graduates this year.



**John Ghim**  
**Associate Director,**  
**East Asia**

Congratulations to the class of 2024. You are now part of TLCI School history.

It feels like yesterday when you first enrolled in TLCI School and you are graduating now.

After few years have passed, you will feel like it was just yesterday that you graduated.

What you learned at TLCI will become a great foundation for your future life and you will become a proud alumni also.

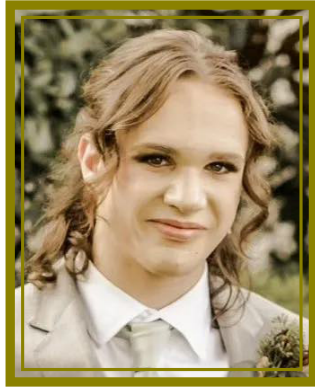
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all TLCI officials and to all parents.

Congratulations on your graduation! God bless you!





# **Congratulations, Class of 2024!**



**Shane Cox**



**Gopinath Harris**



**Ethan Hough**



**Riwon Jang**



**Paul Murphy**



**Ashley-Yerim Song**



**Sean Su**



**Junseo Yoon**

# Graduate Memory Pages

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**Shane Cox**

Hello, my name is Shane, and to be honest, three years ago, the thought of graduation scared me to death. Because that meant becoming an adult and figuring out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I remember looking around at my peers at that time in my life and thinking they were so much farther ahead than I was.

I remember this one day in particular. I had an internship over the summer, and one day, I walked in to find my boss and another guy my age. She asked us about where we wanted to go after High School, and I watched as this guy went into great depth about how he was going to

travel outside of the country to spend time with his family and then come back to America and study music at some university I can't remember the name of. They then turned to me, expecting a similar answer, and all I could come up with was, "I'm still considering."

Over the past few years, however, I have been able to grow and learn far beyond what I ever thought was possible. For example: when I started High School, I was very far behind in math. However, after working with Mathnasium for the past three years, I have become one of the most improved students. While I still don't know exactly what college I want to attend or exactly how the next ten years of my life will go, I feel like I'm now ready for that unpredictability.

One of the reasons for my newfound confidence is my love for writing. It all started in an animation class, which was not for me. However, I really enjoyed storyboarding and creating characters—just not animating them—. After I stopped doing animation, I continued writing short stories until last year, when I finally decided to write a feature-length novel. It didn't take me long to realize why not everyone writes for a living. But I've continued to expand my knowledge and writing style, and slowly but surely, that novel is getting finished.

Finally, I'd like to thank my mom, dad, sister, and brother, whom I watched grow in TLCI, my friends, my consultant, Nancy DeLuca Stempel, and TLCI for getting me to where I am today.





**Gopinath Harris**

Hello, everyone. I am Gopinath Harris.

My journey with TLCI began in first grade, and I have been a part of this global community ever since. The beginning of my independent learning career, and now, with graduation, our time together is sadly ending.

Over the years, I have found and understood my interests and abilities, thanks to TLCI and the process of independent learning. The flexibility of this process also gave me many chances to explore, learn, and cultivate various skills.

One of my long-time passions has been Indian classical music. I have learned how to play the harmonium, a piano-like instrument; kartals, small metal hand cymbals; and the mridanga, a clay drum.

I mostly learned these instruments from hearing recordings and seeing others play them. For the past two years, I have been learning mridanga from a well-known teacher in India who has taught for the past 40 years.

One of my other interests is photography. I started getting into photography when I got my first camera in 2020. What attracted me to photography is how, each time you click the shutter, you are given the ability to create a piece of art. Over the past few years, I have learned much about photography and photo editing. And I continue to learn every day.

With spring comes the garden season. This will be my fifth year as an intern at the local community garden. In my time there, I learned many things about the life cycle and maintenance of many different flowers and vegetables. I have gained experience composting, preparing soil for planting, building trellises, weeding, working with ground cover, watering, and harvesting. I have always enjoyed being around nature, and gardening is the perfect way to do that.

Moving forward, I plan to get a bachelor's degree in Multi-Disciplinary Studies from WVU. This degree consists of three minors instead of a major. It allows me to choose from a broad list of minors, which could help me find employment in many different areas.

Most importantly, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to Ms. Wilder for her patience, encouragement, and insights throughout my academic journey.

I would also like to thank Mr. Smith, Ms. Stempel, and TLCI for making independent learning available to families like mine worldwide.

I also must express my gratitude to my parents for supporting me throughout life and making me the person I am today.

Thank you very much.



**Ethan Hough**

Hi everyone, My name is Ethan Donald Dimas Hough, or people call me Ethan. Now I enroll in Bina Abyakta, Jakarta, Indonesia, and have been able to join the TLCI program since grade 6.

I am happy because I finally graduated high school from the TLCI distance learning program.

I love going to school because I like studying and meeting friends and teachers. I learned many things at school, such as math, language, social studies, and science. I enjoy music and painting classes. I have produced many paintings and have often participated in various painting exhibitions.

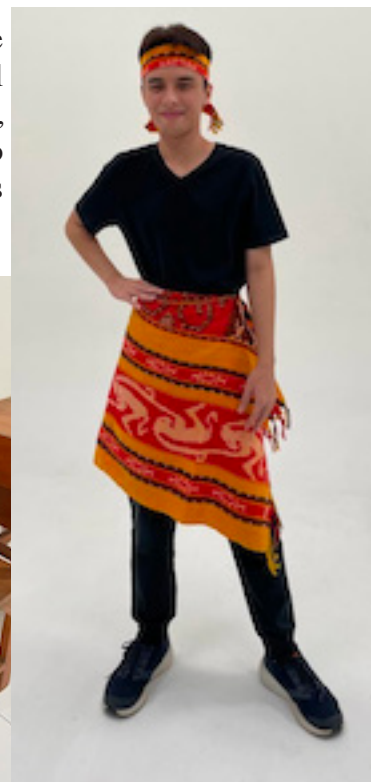
I love playing futsal and basketball or doing Zumba dance during P.E. sessions.

To enhance my I.T. skills, I learned how to create designs using Procreate on my iPad during I.T. class. As part of the business unit class program, I participated in creating designs for merchandise such as T-shirts, tumblers, tote bags, and more.

But the activity I enjoy most is dining out with my friends and teachers for lunch in a restaurant or food court at the nearby malls. I have this activity every Thursday. During this activity, I can apply the money skills I have learned at school and order my favorite food, nasi goreng, and ice cream for my dessert!

Show and Tell with Ms Nancy is the activity I have been waiting for. I enjoyed the process of making posters and learned to create dialogues for the drama or project we created. I'm always excited when I present our work to Ms Nancy.

Finally, Thank you Mom, Dad, and my brother Thomas. Thank you for your love and care and always being by my side. Thank you for Helping and supporting me tirelessly until I can finally graduate. Thank you, all teachers at Bina Abyakta, for your care, guidance, and endless support. Thank you to all my classmates and friends for always being nice to me and being my best friend. Thank you to Ms. Nancy and Mr. Manfred for giving me this excellent opportunity to join the TLCI class.





**Riwon Jang**

I am Riwon Jang graduating from TLCI school this year. Thanks to the broad and flexible academic opportunities that TLCI has provided over the past one-and-a-half-years, I have experienced various learning activities. The last few years of high school were precious time with family. Reflecting upon my experiences as a Junior and Senior in high school has played a significant role in my growth as an artist and an individual.

Since I came back home from boarding school on a distant island, I have had more time to spend with my dog Jennie. The daily interactions like going to walk and feeding her, the shared moments of joy, and the unconditional love she offered became a profound source of inspiration for me. As a result, I have become interested in animal rights, witnessing the plight of abandoned animals and instances of animal abuse.

Furthermore, I had improved my artistic skills a lot. In my free time, I often go to art exhibitions with friends. Usually, I get inspired in many ways such as their techniques, moods, and intentions. Now, I work in an interdisciplinary manner, from hands-on sculptures and paintings to digital and media art, depending on the anticipated impact of the work interacting with the audience.

My next step to pursue my dream is studying abroad for the first time. I am going to college in the United States majoring in graphic design. I aspire to scrutinize and shed light on these personal stories turning into social issues through my graphic design projects. I am looking forward to meeting new friends and exploring my interests. Also, I am eager to collaborate with creative individuals across various communication-driven fields.

#### **Volunteering in Chun-an, ROK**







**Paul Murphy**

Hello, parents, advisors, teachers, and fellow graduates. I am Paul Murphy, a graduate of the class of 2024.

My freshman year of high school was my last year of traditional schooling, and it was quite a rollercoaster. I had a tough time socially and emotionally during grade school, which led to me developing a very negative state of mind fairly early on. Middle school ended up being a good restarting point for me, and I made amazing friends with people who cared about me for the first time - some of them still being my friends today.

I had difficulty with the standard education method (especially homework), and the events of 2020 made education even harder. I did manage to graduate from middle school and went to a high school called “The Gunston School,” which I thought was genuinely great. I still had a hard time with homework (even more so now with AP classes), but my social skills had developed well, and I had a very healthy and enjoyable social life on campus with friends in all grades.

Unfortunately, a major life event happened just in December of my freshman year, and it practically crippled my mental and emotional capacities to function. This event, quite obviously, was detrimental to my ability to work, and therefore, my grades plummeted.

The stress continuing to be prevalent, combined with the snowball effect of overdue homework continuing to pile up, led me to decide to transfer to homeschooling. After homeschooling did not work out, my family and I turned to TLCI to continue my academic career. It helped me catch up on work and personal interests and helped me avoid falling behind or being held back in grades.

Admittedly, my productivity was subpar when I first joined TLCI, and I had motivational issues when it came to doing any work; however, Romana “Romy” Hughes picked me up and has helped me improve throughout my time here. Though I am still working on reaching a stable place in productivity, I have certainly improved throughout my time attending TLCI due to the dedication and stress-management skills of my two parents, who have been ready to assist me whenever I’ve needed them ever since I was born; as well, the educators who have been here to keep me on track throughout my academic journey.



**Ashley-Yerim Song**

Hello, my name is Ashley Song. My learning path had many facets that I was able to explore while attending TLCI. I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to reflect on my journey and express my gratitude for all the help and support I received from countless people.

Life is not solely about entering a university, choosing a major, and contemplating which company to join. Discussing the future together does not only happen between peers who share similar goals.

Authentic advice can unexpectedly be learned from adults outside the classroom as well. I am saying this because even though I went through all the college admission steps, there is something beyond it that I want to share.

I spent most of my time reading and writing about classic literature. Continuously reading others' thoughts impacted my personality and identity. I got to understand myself by realizing where I felt joy or discomfort. I explored the places I had read about in the various books. I visited areas swept by war, regions in conflict with the government, and the last remaining development-restricted zone in the city. I would converse with people there and experience their way of life.

The life I wish to live is the one that saves a person. I do not mean I want to be a doctor. Becoming a doctor is a noble profession, but there are many things doctors cannot fix.

That is why we need various people around us, and I hope I can contribute to a community where many people can safely belong and remove someone's suffering.

It was much later than my peers when I discovered what area of study I wanted to pursue in-depth, specifically, what work I wanted to do to earn a living.

I am planning to attend a business school with my personal goal of influencing corporations to take on the role of solving global issues in this globalized era.

I do not regret contemplating what kind of person I want to be because now I feel proud to enter my dream school as a scholarship holder. As I said, the process involved reading, writing, and embarking on adventures. I may not be exceptionally talented or unique. My educational journey allowed me to take my time, without rushing, to ponder over the community to which I want to dedicate my efforts and the inspiration the experiences created.

I want to thank my family, peers, and teachers for their support. I sincerely hope that my story has been helpful to someone as well.

Congratulations to everyone in the TLCI Class of 2024.







**Sean Su**

Greeting everyone. My name is Sean Nathanael Su.  
Thank God, I am finally graduating!

I attend school at Yayasan Bina Abyakta, Jakarta, Indonesia, and have also been able to join TLCI, a Distance Learning program, to receive a high school diploma and go to University.

I want to thank God for being kind to me and giving me many blessings. Thank you, Mom, Dad, and Kayla, my sister, for loving me, caring for me, and always supporting me all the way. Thank you for helping and encouraging me to do my best.

Thank you to all my teachers, Ms.Niken, Mr.Raffi, Ms.Sitta, Ms.Vitta, and all the teachers who have always helped, guided, and supported me from the beginning until I graduated. I would not be who I am today without your guidance and support.

I started my early years of high school during the pandemic. It was a challenging transition when everyone had to stay home because of COVID-19, especially because I like going to school. We had to take lessons online through Zoom. Even so, I learned a lot during online school and enhanced my IT skills, such as being fluent in using laptops, doing assignments or school projects digitally, receiving and sending emails, and doing show-and-tell online. I am very grateful that we managed to go through the pandemic well. And thanks to God, we can now go back to school offline.

The Show and Tell project has become more exciting and fun! I can show Ms Nancy our activities, trips to museums, outbounds, or simply topics we learned at school. I always look forward to the next show-and-tell session with Ms. Nancy.

My favorite subject in class is language, especially writing sessions, because I can produce many stories. I like science too because I can broaden my knowledge about materials, weather, groups of animals and more. I also enjoyed music class, where I learned to play the keyboard in a band format. My most favorite activity at school is dining out, where I can have lunch in a restaurant or food court at the malls near our school every Thursday. In my free time, I like reading different kinds of books. But my favorite books are about animals. I have always learned to be a better person.

Finally, Thank you to Ms. Nancy and Mr. Manfred. Joining the Distance Learning Programme with TLCI was a fantastic experience for me. Once again, thank you everyone. I am so blessed to have you on my educational journey.





**Junseo Yoon**

Greetings to our respected Principal, dedicated faculty, loving families, friends, and, most importantly, my fellow graduates. You gave me great opportunities and allowed me to take classes in a good environment, so this year, I will graduate with good memories from my time with TLCI - The Learning Community International. I stand on the brink of a new chapter, my heart brimming with many emotions.

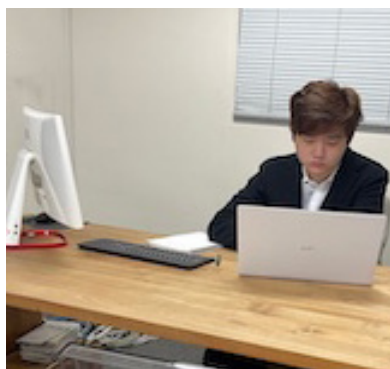
Seeing how far I've come is astounding as I look back on my journey. I entered the classes of TLCI as a young individual with my dreams and apprehensions. This year, I leave as an enlightened, empowered young adult, ready to take on the world. Our school, a microcosm of the global learning community, has been more than just an educational institution; it has been a nurturing ground for my young mind, fostering academic excellence and instilling in me the values of empathy, respect, and global awareness.

At TLCI, I learned that education is not confined within the walls of a classroom. It is an ongoing process of discovery, understanding, and innovation. I delved into the depths of mathematics, science, literature, and the arts as subjects and tools to understand and appreciate the world around us. My teachers, our guiding stars, have imparted knowledge and wisdom beyond textbooks. They have encouraged me to question, explore, and challenge the status quo.

What makes my school unique is its commitment to embracing diversity. I've met peers from different regions and backgrounds, each bringing their unique perspective. This mosaic of cultures has enriched my learning experience, teaching me invaluable lessons in tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect. These experiences prepared me to enter an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

Standing on the precipice of the future, I am reminded of the challenges ahead. Our generation inherits a world of complexity, including environmental issues, social inequality, and a rapidly changing technological environment. However, my training at TLCI has equipped me with the tools to tackle these challenges head-on. I learned to be a critical thinker, a compassionate leader, and a responsible global citizen.

My beloved parents and guardians' sacrifices, encouragement, and unwavering support have become my strength. You have been my best teacher, constant guide, and biggest cheerleader. I owe you my heartfelt appreciation and thanks.



To our teachers and school staff, your dedication, patience, and passion have educated us and inspired us. You have been my mind's architects and my heart's mentors.

And to my fellow graduates – as we embark on our journeys, let's cherish the bonds we have formed, the memories we have created, and the lessons we have learned at TLCI. Let's step forward with confidence, knowledge, kindness, and a zeal to make a positive impact.

In conclusion, as we bid farewell to this chapter of our lives, let's embrace the future with hope and determination. Let's be the change we wish to see in the world, drawing on the strength and wisdom we have gained from our time at TLCI. Congratulations, Class of 2024. I am ready for what lies ahead. Thank you.

# Closing Remarks



**Nancy De Luca Stempel**  
**Executive Director**

Congratulations to you, our 2024 high school graduates, and to your families and friends. I'm Nancy De Luca Stempel Executive Director of TLCI, The Learning Community International.

Congratulations on another very significant year of empowered learning. Empowerment. The definition varies and has become a buzzword that's thrown around but tends to lack relevance unless it's clearly defined. Our definition of empowerment isn't just about giving learners choices, but it's about providing them with the resources and the tools to make informed, wise choices.

At TLCI our learners begin with a guided process of recognizing the inherent talents and gifts they possess... followed by access to resources and tools to develop success skills like gaining self-awareness, accepting personal responsibility, and belief in themselves... now they're empowered to make informed intentional choices about their education and ultimately their lives.

To facilitate our learners, they participate in Dr. Skip Downing's Strategies for Creating Success in College, Career, and Life...this program is a course taught in over 500 colleges and universities throughout the country. With the collaboration of their advisor, TLCI learners engage regularly in self-reflection, self-evaluation, and self-correction. We are extremely proud of our graduates who have embraced this process in setting, refining, and achieving their intentional academic and life goals over the past four years.

TLCI is a way of learning and a way of life.

2024 is a milestone year for TLCI. It's our 40th year of empowering learners around the world. Our team has remained just as enthusiastic and dedicated since our inception to providing learners with a customized, creative, and inspiring program of learning tailored specifically to their needs that awakens them to a love of learning, and a belief in themselves.

In closing, I want to leave you with a quote from Aristotle. Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny." Congratulations 2024 graduates and thank you for inspiring us by sharing your dreams for the future. It is my pleasure to wish you much success in all your future endeavors.



## **Acknowledgements**

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## **TLCI Board of Advisors**

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