

# *The Learning Community International*



## **Graduation**

## **Class of 2026**

**Saturday  
June 6, 2026**



# 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

## **Graduate Reflections**

Seobeen Ko  
Seungryeon Lee  
Doyun Lee  
Molly Helen Murtha MacDonald  
Jisoo Oh  
Junbin Shin

## **International**

John Ghim  
Assoc. Director, East Asia

## **Closing**

Nancy De Luca Stempel  
Executive Director

# Opening Remarks



**Manfred Smith**  
Principal Director

Congratulations graduates from Indonesia, South Korea, and the United States. I'm Manfred Smith, principal director of the Learning Community International.

Like our first high school graduates in 1987, you have made the choice to be a learner at the most unique school in the world: TLCI, the school for one.

A school for one where you can choose a truly individualized educational program that is aligned with your interests and goals. A program that can be customized to ensure that you can pursue studies designed to achieve your short and long-term goals.

What you do have in common with graduates from every high school and college, is the fact that like all graduates, you are graduating at a time when artificial intelligence is reshaping how we live, learn, and work.

Change always makes some people feel anxious and others excited. At TLCI, we see change, and specifically the coming AI revolution, as a powerful invitation to be more human, not less.

Since 1984, TLCI has believed that education must be customized to the learner. AI is a tool that can accelerate that mission—if you remain the designer of your path through life, not the product.

AI is highly seductive. It can suggest what you watch, what to buy, and even what you think. AI is an effective tool, but a terrible master. It requires its user to remain fully aware to its seduction and not allow it to replace your values or your judgement.

As a student, you know that you can delegate all of your academic tasks to AI. When used as a tool, it can summarize articles and help you brainstorm. But the learning that matters most happens inside you. Be sure to form your own questions and create your own voice. Let AI be your assistant, not your author.

As you leave TLCI remember: You have already done something brave: you have stepped outside the traditional model and co-created your education. Don't allow technology to rob you of that unique choice. Don't be a passive user. Ask better questions. Set healthy boundaries. Stay curious. Stay kind. Stay human.

Congratulations graduates of 2026: Make yours a life worth living.



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

As Director of Academic Affairs, I often think about how quickly technology changes the way we learn.

Years ago, people worried that calculators would stop students from learning math.

Instead, calculators changed what it meant to be good at math. Today, artificial intelligence is doing something similar for reading, writing, and problem-solving.

At TLCI, we have tried to prepare you for this moment. We have asked you not just to memorize information, but to ask better questions, compare sources, explain your reasoning, and create work that reflects your own thinking and voice. Those habits matter now more than ever.

AI can be helpful. It can organize ideas, explain concepts, and support learning. For many neurodivergent learners, it can also provide meaningful support by helping break tasks into steps or making information more accessible. That is not weakness—that is using tools wisely.

But AI cannot replace your judgment, your curiosity, or your character. If you let technology do all the thinking for you, your mind will not grow. The struggle to learn, question, revise, and reflect is still essential.

As you move into college, careers, and a world filled with intelligent tools, remember this: many jobs will change, technologies will come and go, but your ability to think critically, adapt, and continue learning will always matter.

Your mind—curious, ethical, and reflective—is still the most important technology you will ever own. Keep investing in it.

Congratulations, TLCI 2026 graduates.



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

Congratulations to the class of 2026. You are closing the last page of a certain chapter in your history. Now, TLCI School is a record which cannot be erased from your history.

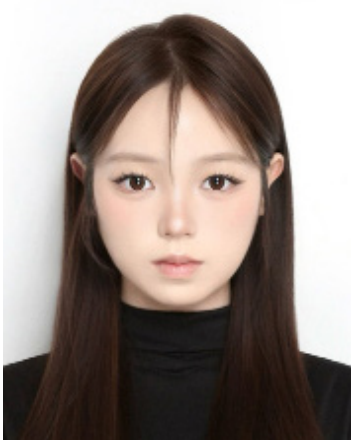
I'm so proud of you and your great accomplishments. Our graduates were admitted to top tier schools such as SVA, Pratt, CalArts, Syracuse, UBC, SAIC, and Yaseda University, etc.

I really appreciate all your hard work and the support given by your parents to you and to TLCI. I also want to thank the faculty, staff of TLCI and our educational providers for their hard work and support to all our students.

Congratulations on your graduation. God Bless you.



# **Congratulations, Class of 2026!**



**Seobeen Ko**



**Seungryeon Lee**



**Doyun Lee**



**Molly Helen Murtha MacDonald**



**Jisoo Oh**



**Junbin Shin**

# Graduate Memory Pages

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Hello teachers, administrators, families, friends, and my fellow graduates. My name is Seobeen Ko, and I'm part of the Class of 2026.

Standing here right now feels a little unreal. Graduation feels like an ending, but also like the moment right before something new begins. When I first came to this school, I honestly didn't know who I was yet. I had goals, but I also had doubts. I didn't have everything figured out—and I still don't—but what has changed is how I see myself and the world around me.

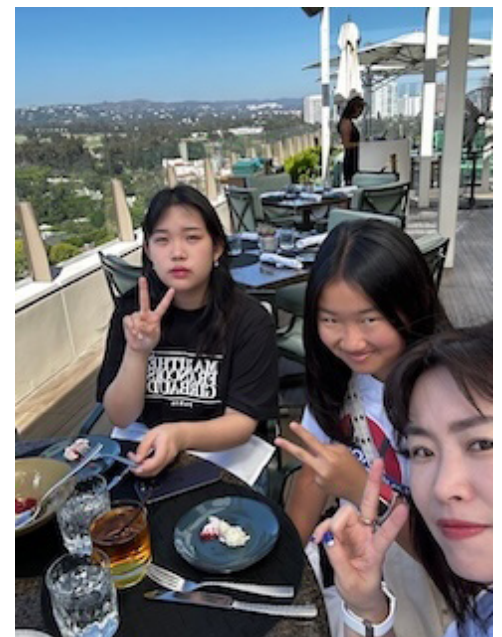
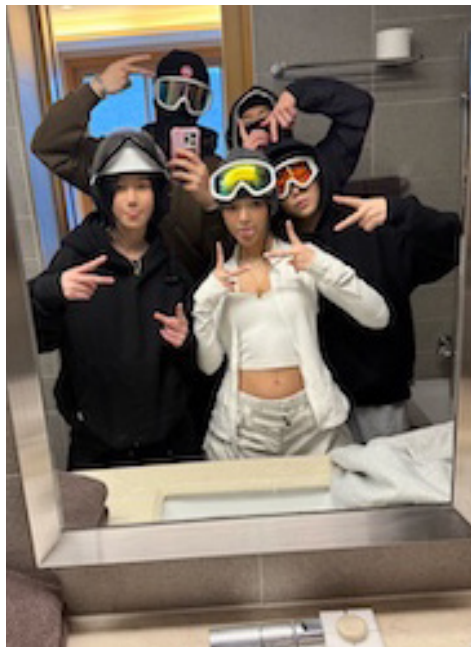
Over the years, growth didn't always happen in big, obvious moments. Sometimes it happened during late nights when I was struggling to understand something. Other times, it came from making mistakes, feeling uncomfortable, or having to start over. Those moments taught me patience and resilience. They showed me that not knowing everything is okay, as long as you're willing to keep learning.

One of the most meaningful parts of my experience here was learning alongside people who were different from me. Being surrounded by classmates with different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives pushed me to think beyond my own experiences. It taught me how to listen, how to respect differences, and how much stronger we become when we learn from one another.

As we step into the future, it can feel overwhelming. There are expectations, changes, and so many unknowns ahead of us. But what we've learned here goes beyond academics. We learned how to adapt, how to speak up, and how to support each other. Those lessons will stay with us long after today.

I want to thank the teachers who guided us, the families who supported us, and the friends who made this journey unforgettable. Class of 2026, we may not know exactly where we're going next, but we're ready to find out. Let's move forward with curiosity, confidence, and kindness.

Thank you, and congratulations.



I knew I was late.  
That part was obvious.  
I did not make excuses for it.  
I did not treat it like a tragedy.  
It was information.  
So I went back to high school.

No comeback story.  
Nothing dramatic.

I needed room.

Room to try things.  
Room to be bad at things.  
Room to see what sticks.

I took classes I did not understand.  
I stayed.  
I took classes I understood.  
I got bored.

That mattered.

I stopped chasing what looked impressive.  
I paid attention to what I kept doing.

I started noticing patterns.

What I avoid.  
What I return to.  
What I do even when nobody asks me to.

I stayed after class.  
I rewrote things that were bad.  
I showed up on days I did not want to.

Seungryeon Lee



High school stopped being about school.

I do not care about sounding impressive.  
I care about whether I am actually doing the work.

It became about exposure.  
Seeing myself under different conditions.  
Most of the time, I move even when I am not ready.  
I did not find a passion.

I found a method.

I move.

Then I deal with it.

Then I adjust.

That has worked so far.

I am not graduating with answers.

I am graduating with tolerance.

For starting badly.

For staying longer than planned.

For not knowing yet.

I started late.

I am not trying to be fast.

I am trying to build something I will not walk away from.





Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Doyun Lee.

I am a student who transferred to TLCI as an 11th grader. As a late joiner of the class, I thought I was late to creating relationships and would not become accustomed to this school.

But I was wrong. Learning in TLCI allowed me to gain experiences not just about the subjects that I had to take, but also the once-thought unachievable friendship and teamwork. All the students and teachers were nice and welcoming, and it was not so far until I was able to fully be a member of the school.

Everyone was so different, coming to this school for all kinds of reasons and issues, but we were so fitting to each other. We learned together, challenged each other, and worked together. Thinking back, the times where we put our heads together to prepare for upcoming tests, travelling afar for a field trip and getting lost, the everyday life in this school were all nostalgic memories for me.

As a student preparing for graduation and planning on majoring in business, the sole number of friends and relationships is not the most important factor. Success comes from true friendship, where one can hold each other back for support. Staying in TLCI allowed me to learn this valuable lesson. Now I will be able to keep this memory for decades, thinking of it every time I'll feel like giving up.

TLCI has not just given me knowledge but hope to standing up in future. With this mindset I wish to continue discovering my future paths of life, making more relationships and growing to become an impactive individual.





Dear Parents, TLCI Students, family, and friends,

I am Molly MacDonald. I am a graduating senior from TLCI. My educational journey hasn't always been easy or traditional. In public school, I often felt overwhelmed trying to balance a full academic schedule with my commitment to dance, which takes about six hours a day. I needed something different—something that worked for me—and that's how I found TLCI.

At TLCI, everything changed. The personalized learning plan and one-to-one teaching gave me the structure and flexibility I needed. I learned how to manage my time in a way that made sense for my life. Instead of feeling behind, I started to feel confident. Having immediate feedback and a safe, supportive environment helped me grow not just as a student, but as a person.

There were still challenges along the way, but with time and the support of others, I learned how to overcome them. TLCI gave me the space to build confidence, stay focused, and keep moving forward—even when things felt difficult.

One of the most exciting parts of my journey was being able to continue dancing while staying on track academically. I didn't have to choose between my passion and my education. The flexibility and choice TLCI offered allowed me to create a schedule that worked for me, which made learning more enjoyable and less stressful.

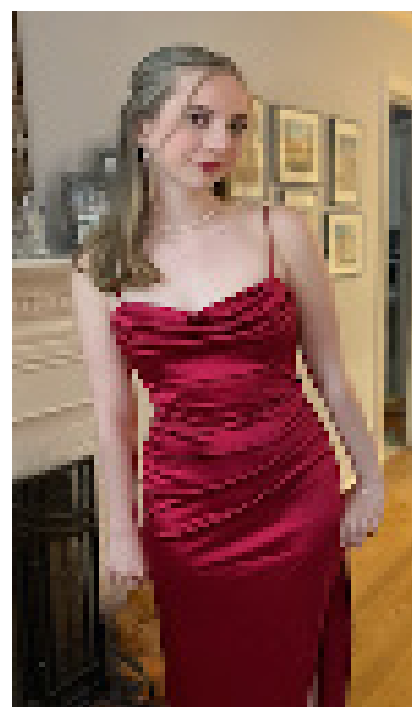
I especially enjoyed studying Psychology and my English class, On Course. These classes helped me better understand myself and others, and they challenged me to think in new ways.

Today, I am proud of how far I've come. Last year, I wasn't even sure I would get into college. Now, I've been accepted into a great school and received a strong scholarship offer. That is something I never imagined before.

As I look ahead, I plan to attend Goucher College and continue pursuing my education while stepping outside of my comfort zone. My goal is to graduate college, keep dancing, and eventually teach dance while continuing to explore my interest in psychology.

I want to thank my mom, my grandpa, my friends and everyone at TLCI for supporting me and believing in me. This journey has shown me that learning can look different—and that's okay. What matters is finding a path that helps you grow.

Thank you.





Jisoo Oh

I've been on this journey since last summer, and for eight months my main ambition was to survive. I dropped out of school and moved into a GED academy, then private and flexible classes. For the first time, I learned to build my schedule around what I wanted. But that freedom came with responsibility. I had to recondition myself to wake up early, manage long hours of study, and stay disciplined without daily structure.

At first, I resisted everything. I kept asking myself why I had to watch my high school friends head off to college while I remained in Korea. Emotionally, it was exhausting. I felt abandoned and unsure of how to move forward. But slowly, I began to understand that this chapter was not about failure. It was about rebuilding myself.

Over time, I adjusted. I learned how to organize my time, take better care of myself, and stay consistent even when motivation was low. I grew closer to my teachers, and being a student no longer felt like something I was avoiding. I started believing that if I stayed with the process a little longer, something would change.

The most valuable lesson I learned is that there is no real way to run from myself. Even through online schooling, learning still required the same effort. That taught me giving up isn't the answer. Sometimes what we need is pause and reflection.

Because of this experience, I'm more disciplined and more aware of the present.

As I transition into college, I want to continue my education where art, education, and psychology can exist together. This journey showed me that growth does not always appear quick or polished. Sometimes, it is staying, learning, and deciding to stick.





Good morning, respected Principal, teachers, family, and friends. My name is Junbin Shin.

I stand here today to share my final farewell as a member of the TLCI Class of 2026.

TLCI has given me an exceptional place to learn and grow, and I will carry these memories with me for life. When I first arrived, I was nervous and uncertain, but through my time here, I have become more confident, thoughtful, and prepared for the world.

Our school was more than just a place of study. It taught me empathy, respect, and what it means to be a responsible global citizen. Through our classes and our diverse community, I learned to see the world more broadly and believe in myself.

There were difficult moments — failed tests and exhausting days — but with the support of my teachers and friends, I always found the strength to stand back up.

As I move forward into university and beyond, I will rely on the critical thinking and leadership I developed at TLCI to face future challenges.

I sincerely thank my teachers for their guidance and my parents for their constant love and support.

To my fellow graduates: our paths may be different, but let us move forward with confidence, kindness, and positivity.

Thank you to everyone who made this journey possible, and congratulations to the Class of 2026.

Thank you.



# Closing Remarks



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

When TLCI was founded, a world like this one—a world where an invisible intelligence sits in your pocket, finishes your sentences, and can pass exams it never studied for—was science fiction.

I want to start by admitting something: that world scares me sometimes.

Not because of what AI can do, but because of what we might let it do to us—if we stop paying attention.

You’ve grown up hearing, “Robots are coming for your jobs,” “AI will replace you,” “You have to be better than the machine.”

Here’s the counter-intuitive truth:

You are not competing with AI.

You are responsible for how it is used.

From the beginning, TLCI refused the idea that every learner should be squeezed into the same mold. We didn’t build a factory; we built something closer to haute couture—education tailored to the human being standing in front of us.

Now along comes AI, and it offers us two paths.

On one path, we use it to make the old system more efficient at being unfair—faster testing, faster sorting, faster excluding.

On the other path, we use it to finally do what TLCI has believed in all along: deeply personalized, humane education that meets each learner where they are.

AI itself doesn’t care which path we choose.

That’s on us.

That’s on you.

You already know that not every learner is served well by traditional schools. You’ve seen boredom, anxiety, talent ignored, creativity dismissed. In the same way, not every community will be served well by AI—unless people like you speak up.

As you move into universities, startups, labs, classrooms, and boardrooms, I’m asking you to carry a few uncomfortable questions with you:

- Who benefits from this technology?
- Who might be harmed or left out?
- And if someone is harmed or left out, do we change the system—or look away?

Because AI will help you do incredible things: analyze oceans of data, test an idea in minutes, learn from experts on the other side of the world.

But it cannot tell you what truly matters.

It cannot decide what is just.

It cannot love a child, hold a grieving friend, or say, “We’re not going to do it that way, because people

matter more than profit.”

That work—the work of defining the problems that are worth solving and the values that are not for sale—still belongs to humans.

It belongs to you.

At TLCI, we have never measured your worth by test scores or transcripts. We have watched a different kind of data:

Your courage when things were hard.

Your resilience when plans fell apart.

Your willingness to learn from failure instead of hiding it.

In an AI-saturated world, those are not “soft skills.”

That is leadership.

So here is my invitation—my challenge—to you:

See yourselves not as bystanders in the age of AI, but as co-architects of it.

Be the person in the room who raises their hand and asks:

“Is this fair?”

“Is this honest?”

“Does this help people flourish, or does it only help us move faster?”

Use the skills you’ve honed here—critical thinking, creativity, empathy—not just to get ahead, but to guide how AI is used in your classrooms, your companies, your communities, and your countries.

You are graduating from a community that dared to rethink what school could be.

Now, it’s your turn to rethink what is possible in technology, in education, and in society itself.

Carry this with you as you go:

AI is powerful.

But you are accountable.

Let that be your compass:

Every human being deserves an education—and a future—that sees them clearly and treats them with dignity.

And your task, as TLCI graduates, is this simple, radical takeaway:

Don’t ask, “Will AI shape the world?”

Ask, “What kind of world will we shape with AI?”

And then, with courage and conscience, answer that question with your lives.

## **Acknowledgements**

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