

# Tidewater Collegiate Academy

AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

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## Family Partner Handbook

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**Tidewater Collegiate Academy**

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The mission of Tidewater Collegiate Academy at Virginia Wesleyan University (TCA) is to facilitate the development of global citizens equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills ready to make the world a better place.

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## What is TCA?

Tidewater Collegiate Academy at Virginia Wesleyan University (TCA) is a private homeschool, which serves as an innovative laboratory school for a diverse group of PK-12th grade students on the campus of Virginia Wesleyan University.

### TCA History

TCA started in the fall of 2014 with 4 students in the Greenbrier area of Chesapeake as Tidewater Community Academy. The goal is to provide low-middle income students an inexpensive alternative to public education with authentic, thought-demanding, and hands on curriculum focused on global citizenship in an emotionally-socially safe space. The vision took shape during the graduate work of Dr. Wendy Scott. 12 young people helped her write a dissertation about how to help young people from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds develop a strong, active civic identity. She took their words and ideas and put them into action at TCA. TCA is a new kind of school built for students, by students. In the summer of 2016, TCA was invited to join Virginia Wesleyan University (VWU) as their laboratory school. TCA opened its door in the Frank Blocker Youth Center at VWU on September 5, 2017.

### Business Structure

TCA is a for-purpose organization developed as a social entrepreneurship enterprise. Social entrepreneurship is the use of start up companies to develop and implement solutions to social, cultural, and/or environmental problems. The director is the sole-proprietor of the private homeschool grounded in the belief that there is no greater investment than young people who will one day take their place as global problem solvers and agents of change.

### TCA Foundation

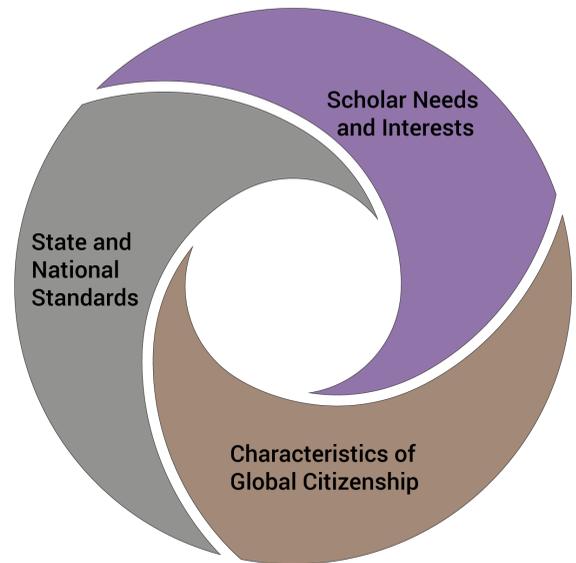
TCA is supported by the TCA Foundation, which is a 501c3, non-profit dedicated to funding scholarships so that any student can attend TCA. The mission is to empower community members to fund transformative, educational programs for low-middle class families. The foundation board of directors is made up of business leaders, educators, and community partners who believe and support the TCA mission.

# Curriculum

TCA creates its own unique curriculum based on three components including state/national standards, individual scholar needs and interests, and global citizenship characteristics. Curriculum is designed by experienced, licensed teachers who have extensive knowledge in instructional design and 21<sup>st</sup> century transformative learning.

## TCA Philosophy

Every part of TCA is driven by a philosophy grounded in the ideas reflected in time tested educational research, philosophy, and psychology. We believe that education should be transformative, offer opportunity to reflect on authentic, relevant experiences, and based on social interaction. Paulo Freire encouraged co-intentional learning defined as teachers and scholars unveiling knowledge, creating, and recreating knowledge and understanding together. John Dewey attested that learning happens through experience and the opportunity to reflect on those experiences. Lev Vygotsky's theory of social development underscores the importance of social interaction in the process of learning. As we create, explore, design, and reimagine education at TCA, we do so with intention and substantive knowledge regarding the process of learning.



## TCA Education Model

The TCA learning model was developed by Dr. Wendy Scott as a part of her Ph.D program, and then refined after the inaugural years of TCA with the help of Amy Schleeper M.Ed., Lead Teacher of the TCA Lower School 2017. The model blends three research based educational principles together in practical context to make learning relevant, effective, and transformative for the new 21st century learner.

### AUTHENTIC

Scholars explore and analyze global challenges through hands on, thought demanding, and relevant experiences with a specific emphasis on real-world application and 21st century skills including communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. The goal is to help scholars realize that what they are learning has a purpose.

### GLOBAL

Scholars are informed of global challenges, equipped with examples and methods to help them take action as a servant leader, connected with people and organizations to provide support, and encouraged to develop democratic values such as respect, dignity, and integrity that help make the community stronger. We hope scholars engage in their community as global citizens with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities.



### HOLISTIC

Learning at TCA takes place in an environment that recognizes the importance of the needs of the whole child. Young people do not live in a bubble focused only on their learning. They are real people living in a world that is sometimes harsh and confusing at best. Therefore, creating an emotionally-socially safe environment with wrap around support such as mentors is our highest priority.

## Scope and Sequence

**Big Question:** Each semester is guided by a BIG question based the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) established by the United Nations. We will tackle one topic a semester with the hopes that a scholar that stays with us will have the chance to explore each of the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Lower School:** Scholars in the lower school will engage in curriculum that emphasizes foundational math, reading, and writing skills integrated with social studies and science content in the context of thematic units. Scholars will advance as they show mastery of age appropriate skill sets.

**Upper School:** Scholars in grades 4-8 will be engaged in an overview (survey) of major topics from each core area including Social Studies, Science, English, and Math. Scholars in grades 9-12 will take a more in-depth look of high-interest topics in the core areas.

\*A more detailed scope and sequence is available upon request based on individual scholar needs.

## Syllabus

Each scholar receives a syllabus that details the guidelines for each course in the Upper School and thematic unit in the Lower School. The syllabus is made up of 6 parts.

- 1) Introduction:** explains the overall goals and objectives of the course, the text(s) being used, and the state and national standards addressed.
- 2) Essential Questions (EQs):** list the questions that the scholar should be able to answer in their own way by the end of the course. The “Essential Questions” outline the goals and objectives of the course in a scholar friendly way. The questions are written to allow scholars to answer the questions in a variety of ways using their critical thinking skills. There are usually multiple correct answers, but scholars must provide evidence from their course work to explain their answers at the end of the course.
- 3) Vocabulary:** lists the essential vocabulary that the scholar should be able to apply in context by the end of the course. The “Vocabulary” area is related to the target goals and objectives listed in the “Essential Questions.”
- 4) Explore:** is the area that details how the scholar will begin to discover the answers to the “Essential Questions.” This area includes the first set of assignments/projects that a scholar should complete.
- 5) Connect:** is the area that encourages the scholar to connect real-world experiences with the content being “Explored.” Scholars are required to get out and about to see, listen, visit, observe, watch, do.
- 6) Take Action:** is designed to challenge scholars to use what they know in a meaningful way to help their community.

## Daily Schedule

8:00	Breakfast Club	12:20	Seminar
9:00	Opening Circle	1:15	TCA Book Club
9:10	Guided Inquiry	1:40	Closing Circle
11:30	Morning Meeting	2:00	Dismissal
11:40	Lunch / Recreation	2:00-5:00	Genius Hours
12:00	Current Events Moment		

## Evaluation and Assessment

Scholars are evaluated and assessed in many different learner-centered ways. TCA implements formative and summative assessments.

**1) Daily Conferences:** The staff, interns, and volunteers check in with each scholar daily to ensure understanding and mastery of objectives and successful completion of goals.

**2) Project Conferences:** Each assignment/project has a corresponding rubric that explains how the assignment/project will be graded. The rubrics are built to emphasize authentic skills. Parents are encouraged to review the rubrics often with scholars. Once a scholar completes a project, they review the assignment using the rubric with a partner and come to a self – assessment score. Then a licensed teacher will sit with the scholar and evaluate the assignment/project using the rubric. If the scholar is unable to demonstrate confidence and mastery of the skills, the teacher will encourage the scholar to continue working on the assignment/project.

**3) Portfolio Conferences:** At the end of the semester each scholar will participate in a portfolio conference. The portfolio conference includes a team of people including the scholar, a lead teacher, a second teacher, a parent/guardian, and sometimes a field/content expert. The scholar presents his/her portfolio for each completed course to the team to demonstrate mastery of objectives. Then the team comes to a consensus on how to score the scholar's work.

## Grading

**LOWER SCHOOL:** Scholars are continuously encouraged to master their individual learning goals. The lead teacher maintains an observation log and running record of scholar progress. The report card will reflect which goals the scholar has mastered and which ones are still a work in progress. No letter grades are assigned in the Lower School.

**UPPER SCHOOL:** Each assignment/project and portfolio are assigned a number of points based on the corresponding rubrics mentioned above. Scholars receive a certain number of points for each assignment. Then the total number of points earned is divided by the total number of points possible. This number is converted to a percentage and corresponds to a letter grade. The final grade is recorded on their report card and issued at the end of each semester. Scholars cannot fail a course. A scholar will receive an "I" for incomplete until the scholar completes the course work and demonstrates mastery of the learning objectives.

### Upper School Scale

93-100	=	A
92-90	=	A-
87-89	=	B+
83-86	=	B
80-82	=	B-
77-79	=	C+
73-76	=	C
70-72	=	C-
67-69	=	D+
64-66	=	D

## Grade Advancement

**LOWER SCHOOL:** Scholars will progress from one grade to the next at the discretion of the lead teacher and parents/guardians as the scholar demonstrates mastery of age appropriate skills.

**UPPER SCHOOL:** Scholars in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade must complete at least 6 classes in order to move on to the next grade. Scholars in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade must complete at least 5 classes and earn 5 credits to advance to the next grade level. A scholar must have at least 15 credits to be considered a senior.

## Transcripts and Report Cards

Scholars receive report cards at the end of each semester. Transcripts are prepared for high school scholars when they complete their graduation requirements or as needed.

## Graduation Requirements

	<b>STANDARD DIPLOMA</b>	<b>ADVANCED DIPLOMA</b>
Math	3-5 credits	3-6 credits
Science	3-5 credits	3-6 credits
English	4 credits	5 credits
Humanities	3-5 credits	3-6 credits
Personal Finance	1 credit	1 credit
Driver's License	1 credit	1 credit
Apprenticeship	1 credit	1 credit
Certification	1 credit	1 credit
Elective	5-10 credits	5 credits
Latin		2 credits
Language		3 credits
College Seminar		1 credit
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28 credits</b>	<b>35 credits</b>

### Early College

TCA Juniors and seniors have the opportunity to take college level classes for college credit on the VWU campus with VWU professors in classes with VWU students. Scholars can apply to the VWU "Advanced Scholars" program and take up to (2) 4 credit classes each semester for about \$50 a credit, or scholars can apply to the VWU "Early College" program and take (4) 4 credit classes each semester for an adjusted VWU full tuition. TCA scholars must obtain a reference from Dr. Scott before enrolling in either of the Early College programs. More information is available on the VWU website.

### Pathways Conference

Parents/Guardians will meet with the lead teachers each spring in order to consider the best academic path for their scholar and consequently, the best curriculum for their scholar.

### Genius Hours

This is our after-school program inspired by Google's 20% time rule. Scholars will receive homework help, tutoring, and participate in STEM activities, National History Day, service projects, and enjoy time to create, communicate, problem – solve and collaborate. Genius Hours are available Monday-Friday from 2:00-5:00pm.

### Learner Profile

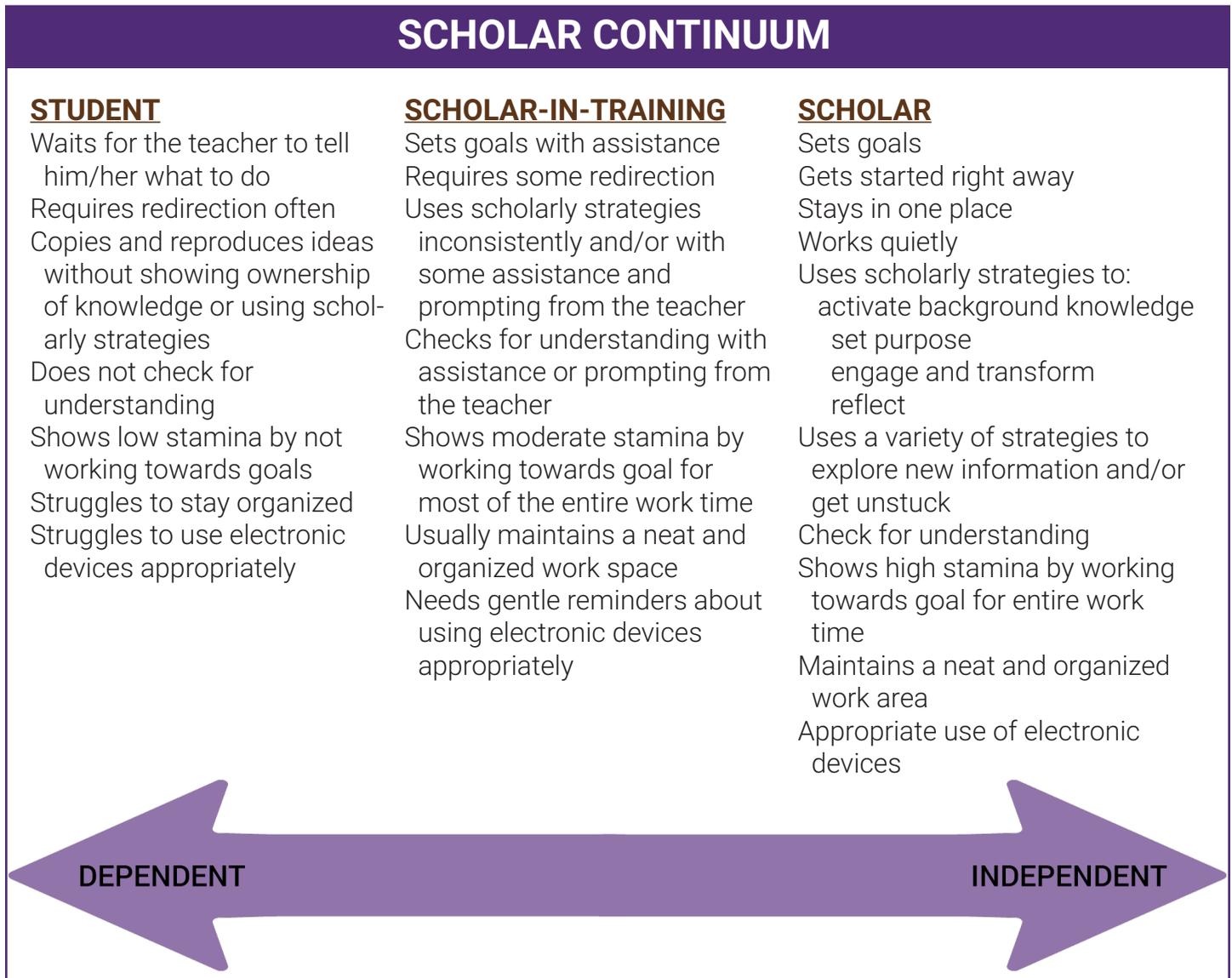
The TCA learner profile lists the characteristics and dispositions that are inherently and explicitly encouraged through authentic experiences within the TCA community. We hope to facilitate the development of global citizens who are:

Open Minded  
Creative  
Communicator  
Leader  
Visionary

Responsible  
Problem Solver  
Reflective  
Caring  
Agent of Change

## Scholar's Continuum

We facilitate the development of independent learners that are capable of using metacognitive strategies to construct their own meaning/understanding and make the learning stick. Our Scholar's Continuum reflects the growth of a scholar from a dependent learner to an independent learning. A student is mostly dependent on the teacher, but a scholar is mostly independent and able to demonstrate metacognitive learning strategies.



## TCA Goals

TCA curriculum is designed to help each scholar meet the following goals before they graduate.

1. Communication: Speaking and Writing
2. Creativity
3. Collaboration
4. Critical Thinking
5. Healthy Life Skills: Vision Statement, Personal Budget, Driver's License, and Apprenticeship
6. Civic Values
7. Agent of Change: Direct, Indirect, and Advocacy
8. Leadership
9. Knowledge: Mathematical, Global Awareness, Scientific Process
10. Reader
11. Connected
12. Habits of Mind for Success

## TCA Advantage

TCA	Traditional School
<p><b>1 : 5 Teacher : Scholar Ratio</b></p> <p><b>Hands on Learning</b></p> <p><b>Authentic Learning based on Real World Experiences</b></p> <p><b>Thought Demanding</b></p> <p><b>Emotionally-Socially Safe Environment</b></p> <p><b>Customized Curriculum and Interventions</b></p> <p><b>3.5 Hours of Substantive Conversation Per Day</b></p> <p><b>Focus on Essential Questions</b></p>	<p><b>1: 25 Teacher : Scholar Ratio</b></p> <p><b>Worksheets</b></p> <p><b>Limited Knowledge Based on Test</b></p> <p><b>Focus on Following Directions</b></p> <p><b>Strong Group-Think Environment</b></p> <p><b>Limited IEPs</b></p> <p><b>18 Sec of Substantive Conversation Per Day</b></p> <p><b>Focus on Seat Time</b></p>

### TCA Staff

**Founder and Director:** Dr. Wendy Scott has been an educator for over almost 20 years working with students in a variety of settings with a Ph.D in curriculum and instruction and a Virginia 6-12 teaching license. She is the co-founder of Get Smart of Chesapeake, Inc. a non-profit, holistic ministry designed to help empower young people to make positive choices and grow confident in their purpose through mentoring relationships. She has been recognized several times for her work as an educator including 2009 Chesapeake Teacher of the Year City Finalist , 2012 Old Dominion Diversity Champion, and 2017 Virginia History Day Teacher of the Year.

**Lower School and Upper School Lead Teacher:** The lead teachers are full-time licensed teachers who reflect a professional, transformative, and passionate teacher. They are equipped to create and implement authentic, thought demanding, and hands on learning experiences, and evaluate scholars progress based on individual and age appropriate goals. They are also responsible for guiding and supervising instructional assistants, volunteers, mentors, interns, field experts, and TCA fellows during their time at TCA.

**Instructional Assistants/Content Specialists:** These individuals are part-time staff members that have a distinct interest in motivating and encouraging young people. They are essential to ensuring that each of our scholars uncover their passion, are confident in their purpose, and reach their goals.

**VWU Interns:** Virginia Wesleyan University students are often assigned to participate in learning experiences at TCA by their professor. These students visit for a limited amount of time for a distinct purpose based on their course of study as undergraduate or graduate students.

**Mentors:** Mentors are Virginia Wesleyan University students and faculty members that have volunteered to encourage one scholar once a week. It is our goal to assign every Upper School scholar a mentor for the year.

**TCA Fellows:** The TCA Fellowship program chooses outstanding VWU pre-service teachers that have gone above and beyond the call of duty during their internship to continue their involvement at TCA in exchange for additional training and support towards their future as a professional, transformative, passionate teacher.

All staff and volunteers are required to participate in a TCA orientation, agree to the personnel/volunteer policies, submit a background check, and provide references.

# Policies and Procedures

## Laboratory School

TCA serves as VWU's laboratory school. We hope to lead a grassroots movement to reform education by helping to strengthen those that are or will play a role in educating our young people. Academic research studies related to education reform are conducted at TCA. It is assumed that families agree to participate in these studies based on their attendance at TCA. All studies that will be published are approved by the University IRB process. Scholars and families will be notified when a study is being conducted and given the opportunity to opt out. Scholars and families' anonymity will be protected at all times.

## Community Behavior

Scholars are regularly encouraged to maintain a scholarly attitude and make good choices. Every family is required to sign a code of conduct with their application. Our adult – scholar ratio is low, which allows for a high level of direct supervision. Our program is anchored around high-interest experiences, which helps to increase scholar motivation to stay on task. The space at TCA has been designed intentionally to create a calming environment with colors, smells, and music. We also are intentional about building a strong community where scholars know each other's name and recognize how they can work together. Finally, we encourage scholar responsibility and leadership through classroom jobs and scholar ambassadors.

However, at times scholars have bad days and/or make poor choices. The human brain is not fully developed until age 25 leaving a lot of opportunity for lack of judgements. Therefore, we have implemented several classroom management tools based on a democratic management philosophy and restorative justice.

**1) Scholars Council:** Any scholar, teacher, guest, etc can ask for a scholar's council when there is a problem or challenge that impacts the whole community. This is a classroom meeting that involves everyone. Each person (scholars and teachers) can share their opinions and perspectives on the challenge. Then each person (scholars and teachers) is encouraged to suggest a solution. Finally, the group works together to come to consensus to solve the problem and move forward in a positive direction.

**2) Peer Mediators:** If there is a situation, problem, or concern that impacts simply a few scholars, they can ask the TCA peer mediators to help everyone engage in a healthy, conflict resolution process.

**3) TCA Honor Council:** When a scholar makes a choice that is disruptive to the community and/or keeps themselves or others from learning, they receive a strike from a teacher. When a scholar receives 3 strikes, they are invited to the TCA Council. The TCA Council is made up of 3 peers including 1 peer chosen by the scholar with the strikes and an observing teacher. During the council meeting, the situation is discussed including suggested consequences. Ultimately, the council comes to a consensus to decide the final consequence. The scholar must agree, and inform his/her parent of the circumstances.

**4) Think Time:** This is an opportunity for the scholar to identify what the problem is, how they are feeling, decide how to restore the situation at hand, and make better choices in the future.

Every effort will be made to redirect a scholar and help him or her make decisions that are healthy and safe for everyone. Each situation will be handled on a case by case basis with the best interests of the scholar at heart. However, in the event that a scholar is unable to change his or her behavior the scholar will be asked to leave TCA.

## Digital Citizenship

Scholars are encouraged to bring their own computers for research and projects; however, this is not required. TCA does have a limited number of computers for scholar use. Scholars that intentionally or unintentionally make the computer unusable will be responsible for fixing the computer. Computers are academic tools and should not be used for gaming or social media surfing during school hours. Cell phones are highly discouraged at TCA, and should be limited to emergency use and as an academic tool when necessary. The staff will do their due diligence to monitor technology use; however, it is imperative that parents be involved as well by using parental control features when appropriate. Scholars may use the classroom phone as needed.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is highly encouraged at TCA. Scholars who miss more than 15 days per semester will be notified of their probationary status. Excessive absences could lead to dismissal from the program. Scholars are required to be at school by 9am and stay until dismissal at 2pm. Arriving late or leaving early will count as an absence. We recognize that there are extenuating circumstances for some families, which will be acknowledged on a case by case basis.

## **Sign in and Sign Out**

Families are responsible for signing their scholar in and out each day. Scholar drivers can sign in and sign out themselves.

## **Security**

The safety of our scholars is the utmost priority for our staff. Our beautiful building is shared space in an open campus, which does bring some unintended challenges. Therefore, we have implemented safety precautions. Anyone coming to TCA must check in at the front gate and show an ID. VWU Security patrols our area often throughout the day. VWU security is available in the event of an emergency. The TCA Director will meet with the VWU Chief of Security regularly to ensure safe policies are enforced by both TCA and VWU. Visitors at TCA must wear a badge to identify them as a "safe" person to the scholars. Scholars are within a line of sight of a staff member at all times. Upper school scholars have been trained to be aware of their surroundings and new people.

## **Kitchen Use**

Scholars are not permitted to use the kitchen. The kitchen is reserved for volunteers and staff. This means that lunch can not go in the refrigerator or be microwaved.

## **Inclement Weather**

TCA will follow the direction of Virginia Wesleyan University. Families should listen to local radio and TV stations for information regarding VWU. In the event that VWU does not close during a weather event, families should use their own discretion and choose to stay home if they feel it is unsafe to drive.

## **Virginia Wesleyan University**

Scholars do have access to VWU resources and campus activities such as the gym and cafeteria. These activities will be reserved as rewards and for direct instructional moments. Scholars will not be permitted to explore or roam the campus without a staff member unless they are in the Early College program. Families are encouraged to take advantage of all the wonderful activities and events happening continuously on campus.

## **Medical Needs**

TCA does not have a nurse on staff. Many of our staff and volunteers are first-aide and CPR certified. We are a private homeschool with limited hours with only a few scholars. If your scholar isn't feeling well, please allow them to complete their assignments at home. If your scholar needs medication while at TCA, please let the Director know. If your scholar becomes ill at TCA, we will encourage you to come and get them as soon as possible. If there is an emergency, we will call 911.

## **Communication**

Communication between TCA staff and parents/guardians is vital for the success of your scholar. We are partners in the learning process. Please, check your email for our weekly updates. Follow our TCA Facebook page @tca2014. Sign up for "Remind" texts. Check for announcements when you sign in and sign out. Ask your scholar to show you what they have been working on. Attend meetings and events when you can. Come in and volunteer or just stop by for lunch. Do not hesitate to email teachers at any time to ask a question or set up a meeting; however, please refrain from calling or texting teachers after hours during their personal/family time.

## Family Partnerships

As a private homeschool, the success of each scholar is ultimately in the hands of the parents, but our staff is here to help in any way we can. It is important that there is a team effort between families and TCA staff to make TCA a great place for every scholar to learn to be global citizens equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills ready to make the world a better place. Please join a family partner team, consider being a regular volunteer, or sponsor an event or enrichment activity.

### Family Partner Team:

**TCA Community Programs:** This team is responsible for organizing events for our TCA community in and out of school such as our Thanksgiving Dinner, Evening of Reflection (last day of the semester), Worlds Fair (last day of the school year). The goal is to create opportunities to build relationships, celebrate our scholars, and strengthen our community.

**Family (Fun)draisers:** This team is responsible for organizing fundraisers that are fun for the whole family such as the Love Fund Luncheon, Paint Night, Movie Night, BWW's Event, and raise funds to support our scholarship fund, special events, and program activities.

### Sponsors:

**Yearbook Sponsor:** Parent/Guardian willing to monitor and supervise the creation of our annual yearbook.

**Newsletter Sponsor:** Parent/Guardian willing to monitor and supervise the creation of our newsletter that is published 3 times each semester.

**Take Action Sponsor:** Parent/Guardian willing to monitor and supervise service-learning projects.

**Club Sponsors:** Parent/Guardian willing to inspire and supervise scholars that are interested in creating an after school club.

## Tuition and Fees

TCA uses TADS, a tuition management company, to collect tuition and fees. It is important for families to check in on their TADS account and make regular payments. Families that fail to meet their financial obligation after 30 days will be encouraged to meet with Dr. Scott. Families that fail to meet their financial obligation after 60 days will be referred to a collection agency.

## Application and Enrollment

Families must re-enroll each year. Re-enrollment information is available on TADS after January 15 and due before March 15. Re-enrollment includes turning in the Notice of Intent document. Families that do not re-enroll in a timely manner will lose their spot.

## Notice of Intent

Notice of Intent (NOI) is the document that lets the school system know that you are homeschooling your child. Families should sign the NOI form and return it to TCA on or before March 15. Then TCA will send in the NOI to your city along with the director's teaching license verifying your homeschool option to use a certified tutor (a licensed teacher). Families should receive an acknowledgment letter from your school system by late September.

## Scholarship Application

Scholarship applications are due at the time of enrollment. Families that wish to reapply for their scholarship each year must 1) update their financial aid application on TADS if there has been any changes, 2) turn in a letter written by the parent/guardian explaining why the scholarship is important and why you want to return to TCA, and 3) the scholar should also write a letter explaining why they would like to return to TCA. Complete scholarship applications are due by March 15. Applications that are incomplete will not be accepted.

## **Homeschool Community**

As a TCA family, you are also a part of the homeschool network in the Hampton Roads Community. The homeschool network is strong and vast in our area. You are encouraged to take advantage of homeschool resources including discount rates for museums, sport's teams at a variety of levels, parent support groups. The list goes on and on.

## **Reimagine Education**

Our top priority at TCA is help each scholar meet their goals and be ready to launch into the next chapter of their life. Our second priority at TCA is reimagine what education can look like in an effort to create more effective methods, strategies, and systems for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. It is a common belief that our current model of education in the United States is broken leaving many young people unprepared for college, the work force, or life in general. We took a sledge hammer to the traditional model of education and started over. We are reimagining the relationship between students and teachers, teachers and parents, school and community, students and students, and students and knowledge. As we create something new, we share our ideas, successes, failures, and challenges with other professional educators or soon to be educators in an effort to reconstruct an education system that truly meets the needs of all learners in a very fast moving, changing, diverse, challenging world. The TCA learning community is a place of innovation. We are on the forefront of educational reform as we put theory into action. TCA is a new kind of school, which requires a new kind of thinking and mindset. What if we all believed that learning should add value to every student?