



STRATEGIC PLAN

THOMAS JEFFERSON CLASSICAL ACADEMY
SPRING 2023

TJCA.ORG

DEVELOPING THOUGHTFUL, ARTICULATE YOUNG ADULTS

GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1110 SOUTH BROADWAY
FOREST CITY, NC 28043
828-245-9526

MIDDLE SCHOOL

2527 US 221A HWY
MOORESBORO, NC 28114
828-202-5135

HIGH SCHOOL

2527 US 221A HWY
MOORESBORO, NC 28114
828-657-9998



MISSION

"Building upon the foundation of the Core Knowledge Sequence, Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy partners with families to educate students in grades K-12 in the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, thus graduating thoughtful, articulate young who are prepared for college and for a lifetime of citizenship and active intellectual inquiry."



ABOUT US

Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy is a public charter school in Rutherford County, North Carolina. For over 20 years, we have been a college preparatory school option for our community, using the classical model of education. This model follows the Trivium, the three natural stages of human development involving Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric.

At TJCA our goal is not just to impart knowledge to our students, but to equip them to think and learn for themselves, for the rest of their lives. The Trivium does this by grounding students early on with the Grammar stage: during the elementary school years and into middle school, students use observation and memorization to master basic facts dealing with history, literature, art, science, and mathematics. They are then ready for the Logic stage, starting in middle school and progressing into high school: through the Socratic method, students build the skills of discursive reasoning, learning to form and defend sound arguments. In the Rhetoric stage (high school), students develop the ability to communicate persuasively; they express the knowledge and logic they have acquired through public speaking, culminating in a senior thesis presentation and defense. These three steps build on each other to produce well-rounded, thoughtful students who understand the purpose of education and are ready to learn on their own.

In addition to the usual North Carolina standard courses, our classical curriculum requires two courses of Latin (with an emphasis on grammar), a course on logic, and a course on rhetoric, as well as an art history course. Beyond academics, we offer an arts program for our many musicians, actors, and painters, and we have a wide array of athletic opportunities ranging from football and soccer to basketball and tennis. Together, our students develop their scholastic abilities, creative talents, and physical skills, in order to become well-developed and virtuous people.



ABOUT THE PLAN

From the 1999 foundation of the organization through today, Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy has aimed to provide an exceptional educational experience to the students in our region, and in doing so, has grown to become one of the nation's leading public charter schools. After two decades, the leadership is implementing the first Strategic Plan to guide the vision for the school and position it for a bright future. With the recent construction and opening of a new high school on the upper campus, the middle campus expanding to include additional buildings, and the healthy grammar school campus, TJCA has expanded our physical facilities. Building on the physical growth, the plan lays out the priorities for the organization to leverage these facilities and our strengths to adapt and better the service provided to the community of more than 1,300 students each year. Three key focus areas were selected by the Board and Administration for the first plan: academics, culture, and resources.

This Strategic Plan was created through the dedication and involvement of a wide group of stakeholders, including recent alumni, parents, employees, board members, and friends throughout the community. The full list of participants is located at the end of this plan. We sincerely thank each contributor for the generous gift of their expertise and their ongoing support.

TJCA Board of Directors Chair
Karin Cook

TJCA Executive Director
Jason Cole



PARAMETERS

The boundaries within which Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy will accomplish the goals of the strategic plan include:

- The TJCA educational experience will provide safe, secure, supportive learning and working environments for all members.
- The best interests of the students will be the highest priority.
- The faculty, staff, administration, and board members are critical to the success of the academy.
- New investments will be consistent with the Strategic Plan, with costs and benefits clearly outlined.
- The Strategic Plan is a central living governance document, modified every three to five years with broad stakeholder input.
- The day-to-day workplans and action items to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors annually.



GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors is comprised of up to 13 volunteers with diverse professional backgrounds in areas currently including education, government, law, security, medicine, science, and engineering, as well as a variety of business skills including operations, non-profit management, finance, marketing, and strategy. By employing a talented team of dedicated administrators to manage the day-to-day activities of the school, the Board can focus its efforts on the governance of TJCA and upholding the charter under which it was founded in 1999.

This duty of governance requires the Board to provide oversight and guidance to support the financial, physical, and institutional wellbeing of TJCA. The members of the Board do this by working in committees that meet monthly, quarterly, or on an as-needed basis. These committees, which include, but are not limited to, Finance, Curriculum, Operations, Personnel and Policy, Public Relations, Facilities, Strategic Planning, Grievance, and Legal, meet to discuss the current needs and to build the framework for the future success of the school. The committees and administration provide updates and recommendations at the monthly meetings of the Board of Directors, at which time the Board will deliberate and decide on a course of action. The open and efficient governance of the school is dependent on the timely and diligent work of the committees.

ACADEMICS



The Trivium model of education, as described by the late Dorothy Sayers, is the anchor of all instruction at Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy. Our students pass through three stages of learning: the Grammar Stage, the Logic Stage, and the Rhetoric Stage. During the Grammar Stage of learning (K-8), teachers provide a rigorous grounding in the "grammar" (the basics) of literature, history, language, mathematics, science, and art by using the Core Knowledge Sequence developed by E. D. Hirsch. Teachers emphasize observation, memorization, and recitation. Once students hit early adolescence, they begin the Logic (or Dialectic) Stage: through Socratic questioning, logical argumentation, and discursive reasoning, they start connecting the facts of the Grammar Stage and learn to develop and defend conclusions about the world in their various curriculum areas. In the last years of high school, during the Rhetoric Stage, students gain experience with the skills of public speaking and persuasive argumentation, synthesizing the knowledge they have gained across disciplines. To position our Academics to compete successfully and best accomplish our mission over the next five years, we have identified three core strategies to adopt.

ACADEMICS



GOALS

- 1** We will increase the number and type of TJCA partnerships to better address the growing needs of the community.
- 2** We will research, better understand, and develop opportunities for new or expanded offerings to best meet student needs and position TJCA to compete effectively.
- 3** We will strengthen interdisciplinary and cross-curricular teaching so students are positioned to ask and find solutions to the big questions.

ACADEMICS

**1**

We will increase the number and type of TJCA partnerships to better address the growing needs of the community.

Next Measurable Steps

Identify a team focused on TJCA meeting growing or changing educational needs through partnerships. Target team identification May 2023.

The team will leverage the report from strategy two to identify opportunities for partnerships, and, with the Executive Director, work to secure partnerships. Target securing one new significant partnership on or before December 2024.

The team will work with the Executive Director to measure success, improve, and report regularly on partnerships to the Board.

ACADEMICS



2

We will research, better understand, and develop opportunities for new or expanded offerings to best meet student needs and position TJCA to compete effectively.

Next Measurable Steps

Identify a team focused on TJCA meeting growing or changing educational needs through partnerships. Target team identification May 2023.

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ACADEMICS

**3**

We will strengthen interdisciplinary and cross-curricular teaching so students are positioned to ask and find solutions to the big questions.

Next Measurable Steps

Assign a team to develop and present a plan for professional development that allows flexible individual self-directed planning by all employees combined with overarching curriculum needs. For classical education, cross-curricular opportunities (both horizontal and vertical alignment among subjects and grades) will be one option for teachers. Target plan delivered by May 2023, first implemented August 2023-May 2024. In May 2024, a report on the first year's achievements will be delivered to the Executive Director and Board.

Close achievement gap. Identify paths to strengthen Multi-Tiered System of Support program and present recommendations to Executive Director (Dec 2023).

CULTURE



Beyond academics, TJCA offers a variety of opportunities: an arts program for our many musicians, actors, and painters, and plenty of athletic opportunities ranging from football and soccer to basketball and tennis. Together, our students develop their scholastic abilities, creative talents, and physical skills, in order to become well-developed and contributing citizens.

The Physical Development of the Child. The famous axiom, "a sound mind in a sound body," originated in the classical world, and this ideal permeates every aspect of a classical academy. We work to help our students learn how to live balanced lives that include plenty of physical activity and plenty of time out of doors. We also offer a wide variety of extracurricular activities for our students through clubs, intramurals, and sports.

The Moral Development of the Child. As a classical academy, we strive to prepare our students to distinguish between right and wrong actions by reasoning through the truth claims of historical writers and thinkers. Our goal is to cultivate within students a desire for the true, the good, and the beautiful. We work with parents to help impart the classical virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. We expect our students to take pride in their work and demonstrate responsibility in all aspects of school life.

To position TJCA Culture to best accomplish our mission over the next five years, we have identified four core strategies to adopt.

CULTURE



GOALS

4

We will foster a sense of belonging for all students.

5

We will increase and grow TJCA's community presence and broad access to TJCA.

6

We will increase and grow extracurricular opportunities and ensure students are equitably able to access these opportunities.

7

We will build a cohesive culture between all leaders across our multiple campuses.

CULTURE



4

We will foster a sense of belonging for all students.

Next Measurable Steps

Grammar: Implement an SEL curriculum and integrate SEL skills throughout daily routines. Using 2022-2023 office referral data as a baseline, we will expect a 5% decrease in office referrals for three years.

Middle: Integrate SEL and Wellness into curriculum weekly. Encourage teachers to utilize Kagan Structures to improve social relations. We want to reduce the number of office referrals by 5% each year for three years.

High: Develop SEL and Life Skills programs that provide students with structured academic, social-emotional, and future planning support. The topics will have meaningful content and guidance opportunities that are intentional for each grade level. Student and teacher surveys will be given and reviewed in the spring in order to determine the success with at least 80% of respondents reporting a sense of belonging at TJCA.

CULTURE



5

We will increase and grow TJCA's community presence and broad access to TJCA.

Next Measurable Steps

First, there is a need to develop a mechanism and assign individuals to be responsible for centrally tracking the schedule for and participation in outreach events, clubs, service projects (Target Spring 2023).

Under the PR lead, increase more public outreach and info sharing with the public, explaining needs, priorities, and choices to all stakeholders.

Increase the frequency of service opportunities for all school clubs by 5% each year for the next three years.

Schedule "Family Academies" focused on specific topics relevant to grammar, middle, and high school at least twice per year.

CULTURE



6

We will increase and grow extracurricular opportunities and ensure students are equitably able to access these opportunities.

Next Measurable Steps

Extracurricular opportunities will be developed and catalogs updated annually:

- Grammar Club Catalog
- High School Club Catalog

We will increase extracurricular opportunities by 5% each year on the grammar, middle, and high school campuses.

We will provide a late shuttle transportation option at least two days per week for afterschool activities.

CULTURE



7

We will build a cohesive culture between all leaders across our multiple campuses.

Next Measurable Steps

Assign each campus a coordinator responsible for leading and tracking progress on culture (Target May 2023).

Increase the number of high school students assisting grammar teachers with after-school tutoring by 10% each year for the next three years starting 2023-2024.

Encourage members of administration and Board to build relationships with faculty and teachers by substituting for one class or participating in at least one on-campus activity each semester (Target 2023-2024).

RESOURCES



GOALS

8

We will secure and diversify revenue streams to position TJCA to grow our mission and vision for the benefit of our community.

9

We commit to attracting and retaining the best faculty, staff, and leadership.

10

We will use all our resources wisely (financial, labor, facilities, equipment and materials).

RESOURCES



8

We will secure and diversify revenue streams to position TJCA to grow our mission and vision for the benefit of our community.

Next Measurable Steps

Describe the process for how TJCA will select, write, approve, and administer grants, ensuring pursuit of opportunities that best align with our mission and community needs (see also report generated from Strategy 2). Evaluate and summarize the need for a grant writer/administrator for CY 2023-2024. Target completion August 2023.

Ensure TJCA meets and exceeds current grant commitments (e.g., NC Access), demonstrating our ability to be a good partner and establishing best practices, positioning TJCA to secure added resources for our economically disadvantaged community. Explore specifically implementing the free lunch program. Target December 2023.

Develop a robust plan for how TJCA will engage alumni, parents, and students in fundraising, including establishing an alumni and parent donor database and annual alumni outreach (Target December 2023). Annually moving forward, establish a yearly fundraising goal and define how priority projects will be established. Target August 2024.

RESOURCES



9

We commit to attracting and retaining the best faculty, staff, and leadership.

Next Measurable Steps

Implement a process to evaluate and report on the compensation and benefits package for all employees to ensure TJCA remains competitive. Target completion March 2024, repeating at least once every three years.

Survey faculty, staff, and administration to identify and prioritize retention strategies. Target completion December 2024, repeating at least once every three years.

See also strategy three, professional development.

RESOURCES



10

We will use all our resources wisely (financial, labor, facilities, equipment and materials).

Next Measurable Steps

Review all current business and management practices (see best practices links[1]). Identify necessary improvements and adopt, including across general areas of legal, human resources, financial, administrative, as well as specific tasks, e.g., business continuity plans, skills analysis. Process initiated January 2023, target full completion May 2024.

Develop and implement an overall resource management plan to be reviewed and updated every three years (Target May 2024). The plan will allow leadership to make the best decisions on resource allocation in a changing environment, and will include an overview of all current resources, with projects and tasks clearly articulated and prioritized, and recommendations to optimize resources.



PARTICIPANTS

Faculty, Staff, and Administration

Dianna Bridges
Heidi Cole
Jason Cole
Kathy Demas
Brian Espinoza
Michael Fair
Jonathan Foust

Jordan Griffith
Luis Hernandez
Darren Jackson
Steven Jones
Jodi Isaacs
Kimberly Lloyd
Timothy Maki

Ron Schaeffer
Michael Smith
Kristen Stearns
Lisa Stepp
Jeff Ruppe
Alex Tiren

Alumni, Parents, and Community

Shawna Hargro
Eli Hornback
Lynette Martin

Michael Minder
Mirek Mystkowski
Carter Plaster

Michael Rash
Cyndy Teddy

Board of Directors

Karin Cook, Chair
Paul Foley
Andy Francis
Jacob Friedman
Doug Grondahl

Jen Halliday
Sally Harbin
Darla Henderson
Ray Maxwell
Tony Robbins

Elizabeth Sabolovic
Jeanette Sims
Christine Sutton

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