

FAQs

1. What is a Charter School?

Charter schools are independently run public schools. As a result, they have more flexibility in how they operate but are held more highly accountable for their performance. They are “public schools of choice,” meaning they are specifically chosen by families for their children rather than being assigned by the district where they reside. The Wisconsin charter school law gives charter schools freedom from most state requirements in exchange for greater accountability for results. The charter, or contract, defines the missions and methods of the charter school. The chartering authority holds the school accountable to its charter; in VCA’s case that authority is the Wisconsin Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO). The charter school motto is, "Autonomy for Accountability."

2. What is classical liberal arts education?

A classical liberal arts education is defined as the pursuit of wisdom through the cultivation of intellectual and moral virtue. The liberal arts stimulate students’ intellectual curiosity, encourage the critical, well-disciplined mind, and foster personal growth through academic challenges. In Hillsdale classical schools, students receive a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and sciences. All students study literature and mathematics, history and the sciences, fine arts, Latin, and physical education because the K-12 years are the years in which we are still coming to know ourselves and the world around us. The three stages of Classical Education are called the Classical Trivium: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Each of these building blocks will help the student to develop as a creative thinker, a seeker of truth and beauty, and a virtuous, productive member of society.

3. How is the Veritas Classical Academy (VCA) approach to classical education unique?

VCA emphasizes individual well-being that incorporates academic wisdom and a foundation of character. VCA’s approach began with intense research about how schools and families can work together to support their children in becoming seekers of truth, maintaining a love of learning, and pursuing goodness to build a purposeful life. This in-depth investigation led VCA to find their answers within the Hillsdale K-12 curriculum. In addition to this age-appropriate curriculum, VCA students will have minimal yet intentional homework, frequent breaks, outside play, physical activities, early interventions, and support when needed.

4. What is the difference between Classical Education and Common Core?

The greatest differences between district public schools’ Common Core and the Hillsdale K-12 Curriculum are found within the curriculum. While Common Core focuses on training the recall of strategic facts in a student-led environment, the classical curriculum focuses on teacher-centered direct instruction. The curriculum is filled with things worthy of study. Common Core focuses on a child's success using strictly academic benchmarks, while classical education emphasizes character development and using academic benchmarks and progression to help create a well-adjusted human. Classical education’s emphasis on math and music uses challenging sources and texts. Literature, history, and art use texts from primary sources and invite students to develop depth of thought, active participation, and discussions. Classical education lifts the minds of all students to higher aspirations of humanity. It encourages a student’s capacity for imaginative and emotional health while developing critical thinking skills and scientific habits of mind.

5. Is the school religion-based?

As a public school, there MUST be a separation of church and state. Matters of faith are left to the family and church. There are many private religious schools that do use a classical curriculum, however, VCA will not indoctrinate any religion. VCA will focus on character development and attributes of the human spirit that will lend to purposeful and wise human beings.

6. How much does it cost?

VCA is a tuition-free public charter school. There is no cost to attend.

7. When will the school open?

The school will open K-5 in the fall of 2025, expanding one grade level per year through 8th grade. A full high school will open in the fall of 2029, according to current growth models.

8. Will your teachers be certified?

All teachers in Wisconsin public schools (including charter) must be certified.

9. Where will the school be located?

The VCA Board is actively pursuing a location in Chippewa Falls to begin the 2025 school year. A Lake Hallie location is preferred for the school's permanent home. Over the last five years, the VCA Board has researched and carefully assessed many possible school sites in the nine-county radius of the Chippewa Valley. A site for an interim K-5 school is under review in Chippewa Falls. In the future, VCA intends to build a permanent home in Lake Hallie. The Board of Directors understands that location is important: it is the last big step to resolve. The Board is also confident that Veritas Academy's mission to provide an excellent public non-tuition educational option for Chippewa Valley residents will succeed wherever it is located.

10. How will you decide who gets in?

A blind lottery will select students from those who submit applications during the enrollment period. VCA is an independent school district. Students within any district (as long as transportation needs can be accommodated) are eligible to apply.

11. How will the lottery system for enrollment work?

VCA's lottery system was developed to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to attend. In the first year of operation, the lottery will begin by drawing seats for the 5th-grade students. If a child wins a lottery seat, their siblings, step-siblings, adopted, and foster siblings will also have the option to attend the school, provided open seats are available in their grade. If the specified grade is full, the sibling will be placed at the top of the waiting list for their desired grade - the school will not create new seats to accommodate the siblings.

Once 5th grade has been filled via lottery and all siblings are accounted for in lower grades, the lottery will continue with the next grade down (4th), and so on down through Kindergarten. After the lottery, any students who did not receive a seat placement will be added to a waiting list. This waiting list will move with that grade, year over year, providing the opportunity to fill seats that open throughout the school year and into subsequent academic years.

Kindergarten will hold an open lottery every year. To ensure equity and equal opportunity, there will not be a pre-kindergarten waiting list. Registration for the upcoming fall term will open on January 1 and close on March 31. There are no qualifications needed to be eligible to apply.

Lottery registration will be accepted digitally, by mail, and via walk-in/drop-off at the school; a registration confirmation will be provided. After the close of the registration period, each student applicant will be randomly and programmatically assigned a number between one and the total number of lottery applicants. The random number assignment process will be observed and certified by the headmaster, enrollment administrator, and a member of the VCA board to ensure integrity. All lottery applicants will be notified of their status - either that

they can enroll for the upcoming year OR their position on the waiting list. Any additional applicants after the lottery closes will be added to the end of the list chronologically by the date of application submission. At any point where all waiting list students have been placed, that grade will open those available seats on a first-come, first-serve basis. Similarly, if the number of applicant students does not exceed the number of open seats in a given grade, no lottery will be conducted for that grade. During the expansion into new grade levels (6th grade in year 2, 7th grade in year 3, etc.), those grades will fill seats from the advancing classes (5th and 6th grade, respectively). Any persons on the grade waiting list will move to fill open seats.

The Founding Committee, Board of Directors, and faculty members may reserve seats for the children legally in their care. However, these reservations are subject to a maximum of 10% of the charter school student population, as per the Wisconsin Charter Schools Act 55. If the maximum is reached, these children may participate in the open lottery system - if applicable to their grade - or be added to the top of the waiting list. Students who wish to transfer after the start of the school year can only do so if open seats are available in their grade level. Otherwise, they will be added to the waiting list for their target grade.

12. What is the projected size of the school?

VCA designed the growth model to add open seats every year. All current area charters and a majority of the private schools (including the private classical school) have waiting lists. VCA will start with a K-5 model, adding one grade per year until the completion of 8th grade. At year six of operation, VCA intends to open a full high school.

Year 1 of operation is the planning year (2024-25).

Year 2 (2025-26) K-5: VCA will welcome 240 students (two classes per grade of 20 students).

Year 3 (2026-27): VCA will add grade six and open up ten additional seats per grade for a total of 350 students.

Year 4 (2027-28): Grade seven will be added, and an additional five seats per grade will be opened, welcoming 440 students.

Year 5 (2028-29): 8th grade will be added, along with five more seats per class. At this point, VCA will have three classes per grade of 20 students, totaling 550.

Year 6 (2029-30): VCA will open a full high school along with five additional seats per grade for K-9, welcoming 740 students.

13. How will the \$6M capital campaign goal be used for the first phase of school development?

- \$1.1M K-5 Building Purchase
- \$3M K-5 Building Renovations
- \$700,000 Salaries, Taxes, Benefits and Insurance
- \$300,000 K-5 Building Expansion
- \$300,000 Maintenance and Utilities
- \$300,000 Contracted Services
- \$200,000 Technology
- \$100,000 Transportation
- \$6,000,000**

*The campaign does not include a \$1.5M operational grant that will be paid over five years from the Department of Public Instruction to help fund salaries, taxes, benefits, and insurance.

14. Do you accept money from the government? Private donors?

Charter schools are partially taxpayer-funded through Charter Asset Management (CAM). Veritas Classical Academy will receive funding through the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI Per Student Aid). Charter Schools are also eligible for state and federal grants, Title funds, IDEA funds, transportation funding, USDA meal programs, and other state and federal aid programs.

VCA will actively pursue private foundation grants locally, regionally, and nationally. It accepts donations from private donors and will remain active in project-based fundraising with its 501c (3) non-profit corporation status. Large capital campaigns will also be evaluated for phased projects like legacy campus construction and school and program expansions. The operation budget is designed to support the school's most essential pillars—a staff of well-trained teachers, an equipped facility, and a vigorous curriculum.

VCA Five-Year Budget

	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Funding					
Public Funding	\$0	\$2,984,495	\$4,357,986	\$5,485,648	\$6,741,023
Grants	\$300,000	\$828,620	\$541,670	\$450,910	\$403,530
School Fees	\$0	\$100,080	\$145,950	\$185,125	\$229,305
Fund Raising	\$1,500,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,000,000	\$700,000	\$700,000
Total Funding	\$1,800,000	\$5,013,195	\$6,045,606	\$6,821,683	\$8,073,858
Expense					
Salaries, Taxes, & Benefits	\$194,100	\$1,788,142	\$2,305,999	\$3,468,432	\$4,330,468
Building and Maintenance	\$739,450	\$778,400	\$787,040	\$799,544	\$809,998
Contracted Services	\$89,677	\$285,443	\$379,690	\$465,883	\$562,616
Transportation	\$1,000	\$219,000	\$316,500	\$399,000	\$488,000
Insurance	\$27,640	\$164,804	\$191,562	\$217,818	\$216,684
Supplies	\$28,000	\$166,452	\$142,673	\$159,429	\$188,169
Furniture	\$50,000	\$300,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Technology	\$66,820	\$53,400	\$53,080	\$69,071	\$73,240
Training	\$6,250	\$21,750	\$23,250	\$23,250	\$23,250
Prefunding	\$597,063	\$1,235,804	\$1,745,812	\$1,119,256	\$1,281,433
Total Expense	\$1,800,000	\$5,013,195	\$6,045,606	\$6,821,683	\$8,073,858

15. Why does the Chippewa Valley need another school option?

Tuition-based and faith-based private educational options are widely available in the Chippewa Valley; however, there is a desire in our community for tuition-free schools outside of the standard school district offerings. The few area charter schools, which are free public institutions, have waiting lists. VCA provides a free charter option that offers (1) classical education, (2) innovative aspects of the Finnish educational system, and (3) a proactive wellness component. VCA is responsive to the needs of students and families and will serve a demonstrated need in the community. The Founding Committee received over 800 responses to a community survey from business owners and community pillars, grandparents, parents, educators, nonprofit directors, and mental health professionals.

16. How do area districts perform academically?

The following data from the latest DPI scorecards for the surrounding nine districts showed the following scores for students BELOW the proficient level (basic and below percentages were combined). The first number is the ELA (English Language Arts) percentage, followed by the math percentage.

City	ELA - % below proficient	Math - % below proficient
Altoona	54	50
Augusta	70	71
Bloomer	62	64
Chippewa Falls	59	58
Cadott	66	64
Eau Claire	54	57
Elk Mound	58	49
Fall Creek	56	57
Colfax	59	58

An educational gap has grown more distinct from elementary to middle to high school. VCA’s focus is on increasing student proficiency and reducing below-basic outcomes

17. How will you support children with special needs?

VCA will address the needs of Special Education (SPED) students through the Student Services Department, which is dedicated to students qualifying for a 504, IEP (Individualized Education Plan), or other education accommodations. Student Services will work collectively to meet the needs of the students through the involvement of SPED teachers, case coordinators, paraprofessionals, therapists, and specialists.

When a student enrolls, their IEP/504 will be transferred to VCA Student Services, and an IEP team will be assigned for each student according to the Wis. Stat. § 115.78(1m). The Student Services IEP team will meet the needs identified or reevaluate goals and services/accommodations. Student Services will evaluate students without an IEP/504 who have been identified as needing services/accommodations by procedures outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 34 CFR § 300.111(a)(i).

Tailoring and accommodation options are key. Tutoring will be offered before and after school to provide intervention to those who lack academic support at home and those having difficulties understanding the material.

18. How will you handle behavioral issues?

VCA prefers to be proactive in behavior management by listening to the students' needs and choosing staff who create an atmosphere of safety, respect, and connection. Based on classroom management and conflict resolution training, VCA will implement a combination of preventative, supportive, restorative, and corrective discipline.

The Code of Conduct, which is in the student handbook and signed by parents and students, lists clear and precise expectations for students. Understanding expectations is the first step to prevention. When discipline issues arise, VCA will handle them respectfully and abide by the code of conduct and school policies.

VCA follows the influence of the Finnish education system, which has age-appropriate, incremental, and intentional instruction alternating with intentional breaks throughout the day. By equally prioritizing recess and instructional time, boredom, extra energy, and anxiety can be reduced.

Certain behaviors at school may occur that the VCA faculty are not professionally qualified to handle. A conference will be held with the parent(s)/guardian(s), school wellness counselor, teachers, and headmaster to

recommend a professional consultation. While the school can only encourage professional help, cooperation will be requested from the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) if the student is to remain enrolled in VCA.

19. What does the wellness component look like?

One of VCA's unique attributes is its integration of proactive wellness into the school culture and structure.

A healthy mind and body are naturally part of a classical school. Based on the principles of the Eight Pillars of Wellness (Physical, Occupational, Spiritual, Social, Intellectual, Financial, Environmental, and Emotional) and additional health-focused practices, the following is a list that contributes to positive mental health in students and will be integrated in the school culture and classroom to promote wellness: directing hopeful thoughts; gratitude; a balanced schedule that encourages sufficient rest, play, and brain downtime; eating nutritious and wholesome foods, exercise, play, hobbies, and activities; active listening; leadership opportunities; words of encouragement; mentors outside of the classroom; involvement in school; practicing and modeling forgiveness; empathy; and conflict management for student and teachers.

20. What sort of volunteer/involvement opportunities will exist for parents?

Parents can be involved in many ways. They can serve on standing committees and the Board of Directors, become active members of the Parent Advisory Committee, volunteer as school aides (library, recess, reading, tutoring), volunteer at school events, become school advocates, assist with school projects, help fundraise, or create awareness.

21. Will you have extracurricular sports? What sports will be offered?

Sports programs will grow as the school grows based on student interest and parental involvement. VCA will develop relationships with other schools to offer as many athletic activities as possible. As interest grows and funding allows, VCA supports adding extracurricular sports in-house.

22. What kind of non-athletic extracurricular activities will be offered?

As with athletics, we anticipate that extracurriculars will grow with the school as based on student interest and parental involvement. As interest grows and funding allows, VCA supports adding non-athletic extracurricular activities.

23. What will school security look like?

Each building and campus will have different specific requirements to address the security needs of students and faculty. Security cameras and door locks will be installed. Additional needs will be assessed by professionals and negotiated into the facility lease agreements, along with planning for a permanent legacy campus.

24. Will you have busing? How will geographic areas be served?

Yes. Buses will be provided for the immediate district where the school is located (Chippewa Falls, Altoona, or Eau Claire), and transfer buses for the Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Altoona, and Bloomer districts as well. Additional transportation services within our 20-mile radius will be considered based on enrollment. Carpooling within parent groups will be highly encouraged.

25. Will there be a hot lunch? Breakfast?

A food service program will be offered in alliance with our emphasis on wellness. Charter schools do not qualify for breakfast subsidies, so the need would have to be assessed.

26. Will there be before and/or after-school care programs?

VCA does not intend to offer before or after-school childcare programs.

27. If students are behind, how can they catch up? How can the gap for transfer students be bridged?

Homework will be highly focused and minimal. Teachers will provide very intentional instruction addressing various learning styles. VCA will establish support systems to identify the struggles of all who attend the

academy, especially transfer students. Tutoring will be offered before and after school to provide intervention for those who lack academic support at home and those with academic difficulties.

28. Will students wear uniforms?

Yes, students will have a uniform and dress code. The dress code and uniforms of Veritas Classical Academy build community and diminish the importance of external clothing-related factors. The dress code promotes professionalism, cultivates a focused learning environment, and prepares students for the future. Uniforms promote equality and unity among students and foster an inclusive environment where students can focus on their education rather than their appearance. VCA students are expected to wear school uniforms daily except for the designated dress-up days or spirit wear days. Neatness, cleanliness, and modesty guidelines should be observed at all times. VCA reserves the right to determine dress code violations.

29. Will uniforms be expected at school-sanctioned events outside of school hours (sports games, concerts, etc.)?

Uniforms will be required during the school day, including field trips.

30. What kind of grading system will be used?

For grades K-2: (U) Unsatisfactory, (S) Satisfactory, and (E) Exceptional will be used. For grades 3+, the grading chart will be as follows:

- A = 90% or higher
- B = 80 % or higher
- C = 70% or higher
- D = 60% or higher
- F = 50% or higher

31. Why incorporate the Finnish education model?

The Finnish National Agency for Education states their goal as: "To support pupils' growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life." This goal resonates with the mission and purpose of VCA. Therefore, the founders looked to incorporate particular characteristics of the Finnish model. These include opportunities for teachers' professional development and collaboration; autonomy in the classroom; competitive compensation; age-appropriate curriculum; frequent recess time and mental breaks in the daily schedule; minimal but intentional homework; learning by experience and play; and, most importantly, concentration on the child who sits at the desk, not their standardized test score.

32. What are the specifics of the Finnish education model in terms of curriculum?

The key elements of the Finnish education system that will be brought to VCA are not curriculum-specific but teacher professional development, teacher pay, the focus on student self-motivation rather than competition with other students, nutritious lunches, frequent breaks, and physical exercise during the school day.

33. Will there be standardized testing?

Wisconsin public charter schools are required to administer the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

34. Who is coordinating the campaign?

More than 50 volunteers and stakeholders, along with the Board of Directors, are providing leadership for the campaign. Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, which has completed more than 45 successful capital campaigns over the last 25 years, is managing the capital campaign.

35. Is the Board of Directors committed financially to the campaign?

Yes, the Board of Directors has already invested \$150,000 to create the school, and they will continue supporting the mission with their gifts of money, time, and talent. All board members have either donated or pledged to donate to the capital Campaign.

In addition, VCA has secured resources from the following: a \$9,000 stipend from the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS), a \$150,000 private donation, and a \$1.5 million Wisconsin Charter School Program Grant through the DPI (distributed over 5 years).

36. How does the fundraising consultants' contract work?

The VCA Board of Directors pays consultants for the time spent managing the campaign, not based on the amount raised. Pre-approved consulting fees will not increase should the campaign raise more than the stated goal.

37. What is the timing of the fundraising campaign?

The campaign's silent phase will begin in November 2024, and the public phase will formally launch on February 27, 2025.

38. What is a pledge, and how does payment toward a pledge work?

A pledge is a donor's promise to give a specified financial gift to a campaign over time. Payments may be submitted over three to four years, from 2024-2027. Individuals and businesses may make payments semi-annually or annually at their discretion.

39. What options can donors use to fulfill pledges?

Donors may support VCA with cash, appreciated property such as stocks, real estate, paid-up insurance policies, and, in some cases, in-kind gifts. When a gift of stock is made to the campaign, it will be sold, and the resultant funds will be issued to the campaign. Checks, commodities, appreciated property, land sale, or other property may be used to satisfy pledge payments according to each donor's desired schedule. Grants from donor-advised funds are accepted but cannot fulfill a pledge. Payroll deductions may also be an option if companies wish to offer this to their employees. Employees of companies offering matching programs for charitable contributions are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

40. Are contributions tax-deductible?

Each contribution is tax-deductible according to IRS standards. The campaign office will send an acknowledgment of all pledges. As payments are remitted, donors will receive "thank you" receipts and substantiation of the amount gifted for their tax records.

41. Why do you feel confident you can raise \$6M?

Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC has completed a Campaign Readiness Study for VCA that had the largest and most positive response they have witnessed in over 20 years of working on capital campaigns. VCA is confident the goal will be met, with the positive results of the readiness study completed in preparation for the campaign and the strong interest in being involved in pre-campaign committees.

42. Will campaign volunteers seek foundation support?

The campaign will apply for private foundation grants. However, philanthropic research shows that most funds given in the U.S. come from individuals.

43. Will a challenge or matching gift be offered to help engage giving?

Opportunities may exist for donors wishing to provide a challenge grant. More information will be available as the campaign donors' wishes are implemented with the consultants, Campaign Co-chairs, and the Steering committee.

44. Will donors of large gifts be given preferential opportunity to secure a seat for their children?

VCA was intentionally designed to welcome all students. By law, WI public charter schools must enroll their students through a lottery system, which ensures the most equitable way to secure students.

45. What is the Donor Recognition Plan?

All contributions of \$1,000 or more to the Veritas Classical Academy Capital Campaign will be recognized on a donor wall that will be movable to the school's current and future sites. Gifts and pledges will be publicly acknowledged during the campaign without identification of amounts unless the donor wishes to remain anonymous. All gifts and pledges are confidential unless the donor provides permission to encourage other donors or, in the case of a challenge grant announcement. Donors may choose to make their gifts in honor or memory, in recognition of specific events or accomplishments, or may choose to engrave names on the plaques, as listed below.

The following Giving Societies have been established to recognize levels of gifts and pledges. The sizes of the plaques will be related to the sizes of the gifts they recognize. A subcommittee will finalize the plan. Sizes of the plaques may be adjusted according to the final dimensions of the overall space, which are not known at this time. The exact dimensions will be shared with donors before installation. Donors will be able to identify how they wish their names to be listed before installation.

Naming Right Features to be recognized	Suggested gift amount
Naming the School	\$3M
Cafeteria and Gymnasium	\$1M
Library	\$500,000
Outdoor Recreation and Playground	\$500,000
Main Hallway	\$250,000
Art Room	\$250,000
Audio Visual Room	\$250,000

Truth Seekers Society	\$150,000 to \$249,999	Plaque based on gift range
Visionary Leaders Society	\$50,000 - 149,999	Plaque based on gift range
Wisdom Society	\$25,000-\$49,999	Plaque based on gift range
Virtue Society	\$15,000-\$24,999	Plaque based on gift range
Critical Thinkers Society	\$7,500-\$14,999	Plaque based on gift range
Character Society	\$5,000-\$7,499	Plaque based on gift range
Founders Society	\$1,000-\$4,999	Plaque based on gift range
*Masterpiece Art in the School	\$500-\$999	(25)

Donors who wish to provide classical art pieces in VCA, which is encouraged by Hillsdale College, may choose from a list of suggested masterpieces that will be showcased in school hallways and classrooms with the donors' names.

46. How do I donate?

Volunteer solicitors on the Steering Committee will reach out to schedule a time to meet with donors to discuss the opportunities and benefits of opening the school and their involvement in making this long-anticipated dream a reality.

Each contributor should consult with his or her tax advisor to identify tax advantages for his or her specific situation. Please email info@veritasclassical.org if you have additional questions. Many donors may pledge over time, which is often an easier way to give. The campaign will verify each gift for tax purposes.