



VERITAS

CLASSICAL ACADEMY

CLASSICAL VALUES,
MODERN VISION

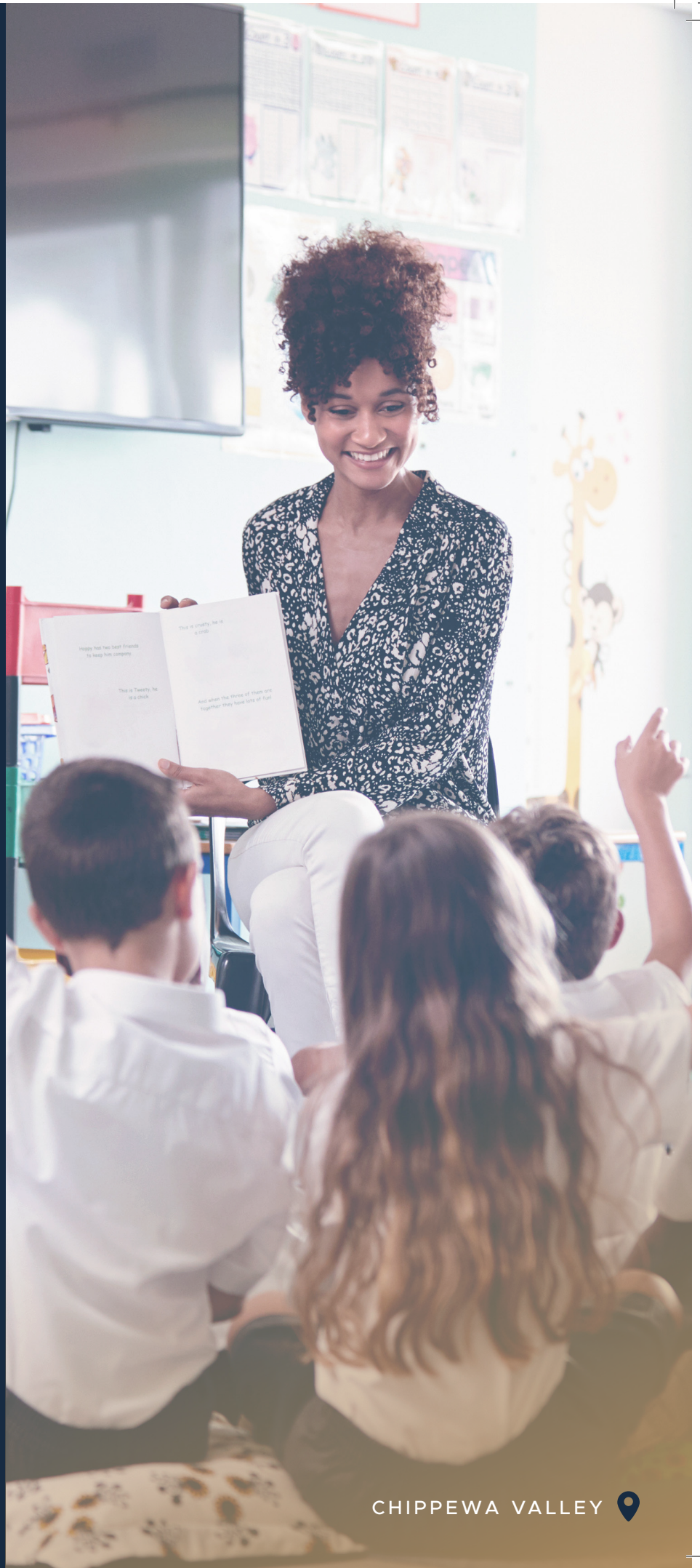
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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CASE STATEMENT

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BRINGING CLASSICAL
VALUES AND MODERN
VISION TO THE
CHIPPEWA VALLEY

NOVEMBER 1, 2024



CHIPPEWA VALLEY 

WHY I BELIEVE IN CLASSICAL EDUCATION

By Kim Senn, Board President

Member of the Veritas Classical Academy
Founding Committee

Many factors contributed to my decision to be involved in Veritas Classical Academy. I was an educator and have always been an advocate for children. I have two children, and while my daughter was able to assimilate into the public school system, public school did not work for my son.

We bounced from public school to private school and back, trying to find just the right educational avenue for him that not only worked with his struggles, but reinforced the skills we believed would serve him. Due to this situation, I went on a quest to find answers to the endless questions I had regarding educating a whole child. I researched educational systems, not just nationally, but throughout the world. I wanted to know what our educational system could do to help parents give their children not only an outstanding academic experience but also instill character development. What are the keys to education that will help children live a purposeful and gratifying life?

I shared this information with the Denning family. Jamey and Sara Denning happened to have a daughter attending Hillsdale College that year. They called me and asked if I was familiar with the Hillsdale K-12 program and if I would be willing to watch an informational video about the Hillsdale charter school program. I said, "Absolutely. However, if the video does not mention the importance of educating the whole child, I am out. If there is no mention of character education, I am not interested. If they say data is more important than the soul at the seat, I am going no further."

I told them I was very interested if the video addressed three issues: 1. The importance of the whole child 2. A strong character development component and 3. The soul at the seat was more important than standardized tests.

I watched that video with tears in my eyes and an undeniable feeling that I had to be involved in bringing this opportunity to the Chippewa Valley. The philosophy of the Hillsdale K-12 program aligned with every bit of research I had done as to how to



KIM SENN, VCA BOARD PRESIDENT

help parents educate wise and heartfelt citizens. This was the catalyst for me to become involved with this project.

Our children must be looked at as whole human beings. Their academic knowledge must be met with virtues that will help our children be successful citizens. Veritas Classical Academy's strategic instruction is the product that we deliver to our children to help create people who ask questions, love learning, and think independently throughout their lives. Wisdom comes to those who have the confidence to be wrong and the strength and humility to learn what is right. Desiring knowledge based in truth creates a thirst for understanding. By allowing our students to study, debate, and investigate rich concepts, Veritas Classical Academy students will be taught how to think, not what to think. This will, in turn, make them employable in any area after high school and will give them a foundation of personal truth that brings life well lived.

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The Veritas Classical Academy community is incredibly grateful for the assistance of the many individuals who have worked diligently since 2020 to make this classical charter school a reality for the students and families in the Chippewa Valley.

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VERITAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

Veritas Classical Academy (VCA) exists to educate the minds and inspire the hearts of young people through a content-rich, classical curriculum that emphasizes the principles of moral character and civic responsibility. By intentionally fostering a culture of intrinsic wellness, VCA prepares students to become the healthy, virtuous, and authentic foundation of future American generations.

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

To open the charter school's doors in August 2025, the Veritas Classical Academy Campaign will raise \$6M in gifts and pledges that may be paid over three years. A team of volunteers (previously listed) has been organized to set the foundational underpinnings for a successful capital campaign and school opening.

Over the past five years, the vision for VCA has grown. Last year a Campaign Readiness Study was completed to determine whether a \$6M capital campaign would be successful. The study determined that area business and philanthropic leaders were resoundingly supportive of the Veritas Classical Academy Board to move forward with the capital campaign. In the spring a \$1.5M grant was awarded for planning and implementation, which moved the next stages of planning into high gear. The next key step was recruiting a headmaster to lead the school and with the arrival of Headmaster Jonathan Gray, VCA is positioned to open in the fall of 2025 with the completion of a successful \$6M capital campaign.

The \$6M campaign will fund the following capital priorities:

\$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
<u>\$100,000 Transportation</u>
<u>\$6,000,000</u>

VCA's partnerships are in place. The volunteers are eager. The programming model is proven. This campaign is the culmination of unmet needs and a desire to change the region's ability to provide a joyful educational opportunity for students.





“For the essence of a school is always intellectual and moral—it is something made of mind and spirit, not bricks and mortar, steel and glass, or hardwood and grass. What defines an academy is not the building, but the culture: the set of ideals established by our curriculum and expectations, the actions of our teachers to bring it to life, and—most importantly—the unique response of each generation of students and families to the school and its mission.”

– ANDREW ELLISON

FORMER HIGH SCHOOL HEADMASTER AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR THE PUBLIC CHARTER NETWORK OF GREAT HEARTS

THREE UNIQUE CORE BELIEFS OF VERITAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY – CHIPPEWA VALLEY

The VCA Board of Directors believes that these core values are vital to keeping them focused on their goals and dedicated to VCA's educational mission.

PEOPLE



The people of VCA are marked by a love for the Chippewa Valley. They are parents, teachers, business leaders, and professionals who recognize a need for education that looks to something more enduring than experimental educational theories for its purpose and to something further than standardized test scores for its success.

CULTURE



As wise farmers know the various nutrients their plants need to yield a full crop, VCA knows the whole human person needs various sources of nourishment to grow strong, healthy, and fruitful. The mind hungers for truth acquired through knowledge, the soul desires beauty present in the sensible world, and the body desires goodness for fulfillment, particularly good actions, which, moment by moment and action by action, build a life marked by goodness. These three elements form the culture of VCA.

SCHOOL



VCA is the first school of its kind in the Chippewa Valley: a classical public charter school. VCA provides the Valley with a time-tested, vigorous public education that is tuition-free.



“The mission of the school is to prepare students for a life of virtue and purpose. And classical education does this. It has a 2,000-year record of success.”

– JONATHAN GRAY

WELCOME VERITAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY HEADMASTER – JONATHAN GRAY

In June 2024 Jonathan Gray accepted the position of Headmaster at VCA, arriving with his family in September 2024. The hiring of a headmaster was an important step in the process of planning and establishing the school.

Gray has over a decade of experience working in classical charter schools at all levels: from 3rd grade to 12th grade and from Teacher’s Assistant to Assistant Headmaster. His passion for classical education arises from watching the daily growth of joy and excellence in his students, many of whom were new to classical education. Seeing these young men and women discover interests, abilities, and potentials they never knew they had, and the growth of confidence and moral character that accompanies these discoveries, persuaded him that this model of education should be shared as widely as possible. Realizing this vision has become his life’s work. He and his wife, Allison, have four young children and a shaggy mop of a dog. When he is not on campus, you can find him reading, playing LEGOs with his kids, fishing, or tossing a baseball around.

Mr. Gray’s complete resume may be found in the appendix.



JONATHAN GRAY, HEADMASTER

CLASSICAL EDUCATION IN A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL FORM

The chosen curriculum is based on core knowledge and classical education, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences, and offers a grounding in civic virtue and character cultivation.

The word “classical” denotes a school committed to a model of education that has proved effective for thousands of years. This model was first articulated systematically in 4th-century Athens, a time often referred to as Greece’s Classical Period. Fundamentally, classical schools desire to see and teach their students as whole human beings composed of mind, body, and spirit. Classical schools ask their students to consider questions like, “What does it mean to be human?” “What does it mean to live well?” “How can I know if something is true?” In asking and seeking answers to these foundational questions, students are prepared to take their place as citizens, adults, and human beings.

"HE WHO CANNOT
DRAW ON THREE
THOUSAND YEARS IS
LIVING FROM HAND
TO MOUTH"

– JOHANN WOLFGANG
VON GOETHE

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are public, nonsectarian schools created through a business-like contract or "charter" between the charter governance board and the sponsoring school board or other chartering authority. VCA's chartering authority, or authorizer, is the Office of Education Opportunity (OEO), which operates within the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Wisconsin charter school law gives charter schools freedom from most state rules and regulations in exchange for greater accountability for results. The charter defines the missions and methods of the charter school. The chartering authority holds the school accountable to its charter. The charter school motto is "Autonomy for Accountability."¹

¹ <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/charter-schools> "Charter Schools in Wisconsin"

As a classical school, VCA will be dedicated to pursuing Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Historically, these three elements are known as the "transcendentals" because they transcend or surpass all other things as the cause and object of human action. At the center of the school crest is a "V" for Veritas since Truth will be the center of life as a school. At VCA a desire for Truth inspires inquiry, and an understanding of Truth is the highest aim.

Career and college readiness increase through character development, civic responsibility, and education of the self through virtues promoting mental health and happiness. These traits instill the needed fuel for personal fulfillment after high school as they help develop the ability to confront difficulties and promote the diligence it takes to further one's education.

VCA intentionally fosters a culture of intrinsic wellness to serve students from a whole-person perspective, acknowledging that body, mind, and soul/spirit are one. By focusing on mental health and the pillars of wellness, by having a dedicated mental and behavioral health specialist onsite, and by using the educational practices of the Finnish school model, VCA will work to steadily accomplish this mission. Development of self-governance, charity, fortitude, humility, perseverance, integrity, prudence, justice, friendship, citizenship, love of curiosity, teamwork, lifelong learning, discussion skills, and truth-seeking encourage a person to strive for their best at VCA and beyond.

VCA focuses on three pillars to address educational diversity and to be responsive to students needs.



As a free public school open to all, VCA strives for equity. However, VCA also recognizes the concern that a classical education model can unintentionally create boundaries and restrictions, creating a funnel for elite students, eliminating diversity, and creating a lack of appropriate opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students. These concerns are addressed within the educational model by balancing the perceived rigor of the curriculum with the Finnish models of an age-appropriate curriculum that compliments brain development. Breaks improve focus, learning, and retention and reduce disruptive behaviors.

Students receive the support they need by incorporating the following:

- Frequent breaks
- Outside play
- Physical activities
- Minimal yet intentional homework and interventions.

VCA students will develop their own moral compass to guide them through life.

VCA welcomes and encourages parents to be involved in their child's educational journey. Parents will be engaged in school community meetings, learning about the VCA education model, and taking part in VCA outreach and family educational events. Parents can also serve on VCA standing committees, serve on the Parent Advisory Council, volunteer as aides during the school day, volunteer at events, be school advocates, assist with projects, help fundraise, and create awareness.

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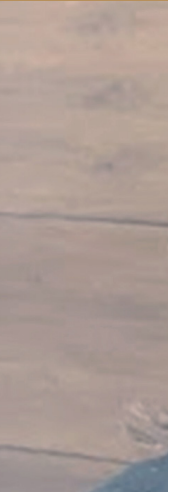
– CHRIS ALBERTON
VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“I have two daughters of my own, and my greatest hope for them is to find their niche in the world, the thing that they can be passionate about and enjoy pouring their time and energy into. As parents and mentors, I feel like our ultimate goal should be to help our young people find fulfillment and happiness in their lives and to help them grow into healthy, high-character adults. In my exposure to classical education, both the core tenets and the spirit of the children in the classrooms, it provides a solid foundation and a set of tools for families to successfully navigate those journeys. Therefore, I'm honored to be a part of bringing such an opportunity to the folks in our area!”



“

“As an immigrant to the U.S., I attended school both abroad and in America. A United States degree had the envy of countries around the world for decades, but as I prepared for my young son to enter school, I saw that American education was changing. It increasingly trains our children into a particular job or career rather than educating them how to think critically and navigate the world with a good moral compass. The tried-and-true methods of classical education survive generations and educational trends and give me hope for our children’s future. I joined the Veritas Classical Academy team to support the enrichment of the minds and souls of our future generations and to help them understand more deeply and interact virtuously with their ever-changing modern world.”



Many public schools have cut recesses and decreased opportunities for physical education, focus on test scores instead of student learning growth, and do not include character development. Many of their students face learning challenges and struggle with an age-appropriate education. VCA, however, will have a curriculum designed to develop analytical skills and set attainable but challenging expectations.

VALUE-BASED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The values VCA holds close are in higher demand more than ever before — prioritizing whole-person health, looking beneath the surface of behaviors to identify the root cause, increasing focus on disadvantaged and underserved students, and focusing more on students' personal growth. The faculty of VCA will look beyond preparing students to be good local citizens during their time in school by helping them become global citizens who do good in the world.

VCA aims to graduate students ready to take their place in the world with confidence, self-awareness,

and faith in their community and themselves. VCA graduates will not be trained for specific careers. Instead, they will be taught foundational intellectual skills such as problem solving and communicating effectively. Pursuing these skills and developing a person’s desire to pursue what is good makes a VCA graduate an excellent employer, employee, and co-worker.

“We are preparing students for jobs that don’t even exist now.” Megan McLaughlin-Barck, Case Statement Committee Volunteer

VCA will be a school for everyone — those who excel academically and those who struggle. By leveling the playing field and removing barriers, students can achieve their greatest potential.

CLASSICAL CURRICULUM

Hillsdale Curriculum

VCA is a licensed user of and will follow the Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative’s curriculum, an outreach program of Hillsdale College that provides a classical education that is content-rich across math, science, English language arts, and history — with significant attention to music, visual art and foreign language.



– RIMA DEFATTA
VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Virtus Tentamine
Gaudet* (Latin):
Strength rejoices
in a challenge.

Hillsdale College was founded to provide sound learning, and its curriculum lays a strong foundation in key subjects, creating intellectual, moral, and civically minded graduates.

The Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative is devoted to revitalizing public education by launching and supporting classical K-12 charter schools. The following statistics illustrates the success of these charters:

Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative is over a decade old, with schools in over 18 states. Of those schools, **88%** showed testing scores that exceeded both local and state school district scores in English language arts, and **70%** exceeded the state average in math.²

These charter school students **consistently outscored** their contemporary counterparts in both the SAT and ACT college prep tests.³

Dr. Kathleen O'Toole, Assistant Provost for K-12 Education at Hillsdale College, speaks highly of the student scholars that attend Hillsdale Classical Schools. "You see things that don't go on in public schools anymore. We're training the minds and hearts of our students." She adds, "We want them to be

virtuous and knowledgeable people, and we want them to spend their lives pursuing the good."

The Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative curriculum seeks to educate for the sake of learning and to create lifelong learners. The model encourages training the human being for a fruitful life. Mind, body, and soul/spirit are of extreme value in the Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative curriculum. Teachers focus on modeling and guiding these areas each day.

The classical curriculum approach espoused by Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative means teaching to the whole child with a curriculum of humanities, ethics, civic duties and classical literature, as well as a significant emphasis on Latin and exposure to the arts. The three stages of the classical curriculum are called the "Classical Trivium" and include Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Each of these stages helps develop students as creative thinkers, seekers of truth and beauty, and virtuous and productive members of society.

² "Barney Charter School Initiative." K12.Hillsdale.edu, k12.hillside.edu/About/BCSI/. Jan. 2023

³ "Our Work." K12.Hillsdale.edu, k12.hillsdale.edu/About/Our-work/. Accessed Jan.2023

STAGES OF CLASSICAL EDUCATION

- Students in grades K-5 are part of the “Grammar Stage.” This developmental stage is conducive to memorization using songs, chants, and rhymes. These academic facts, along with the building blocks of virtue, lay the foundation for advanced study and human development.
- In middle school (grades 6-8), students are in the “Logic Stage.” They are ready to begin asking, “Why?” Their brains are naturally wired to be more argumentative and curious. By allowing that curiosity, the classical curriculum teaches students to argue with wisdom and eloquence. During this stage, students learn with reason, pay attention to cause and effect, and develop informal and formal logic.
- Finally, students in grades 9-12 are part of the “Rhetoric Stage.” High school students learn to write and speak with force and originality as they become independent thinkers and communicators. They can apply the logic and foundational information learned from their past years and stages and express their conclusions in clear, defined, and elegant language.

HOW IS CLASSICAL CURRICULUM DIFFERENT FROM COMMON CORE?

The greatest differences between Common Core and the classical curriculum lie in instruction, focus, and intention.

Scientific study has been part of classical education for millennia and remains vital to classical curricula. In a classical science program, students go deeper than the

typical focus on applied science. Students study the sciences because knowledge about the world around them is worth knowing, regardless of whether it is immediately useful. When the sciences are studied merely for their practical applications, the wonder and inquiry that drive true scientific investigation are quickly lost. Students will study the practical applications of science but as results of scientific investigation rather than its primary purpose.

The classical curriculum uses tried-and-true methods that are successful, such as practicing cursive, memorizing and reciting math facts and poetry, and diagramming sentences. The focus is on learning and knowing things at their depth, instilling a love and pursuit of excellence, and cultivating intellectual thinking and moral virtue.

While the Common Core focuses on memorization as a means to an end, the classical curriculum uses memorization to enrich the understanding and experience of the material. Common Core focuses on a student's success using academic benchmarks and test scores, while classical curriculum seeks to develop a well-rounded and adjusted person who constantly pursues growth. Classical curriculum emphasis on math, music, and art offers higher and more challenging educational opportunities, allowing students to think with uncommon depth.

THE HILLSDALE DIFFERENCE

Benefits of being a Hillsdale Member School

The Hillsdale College K-12 Education Office provides ongoing support, free of charge, to assist in the establishment of classical schools and to maintain ongoing support and teacher training. They provide curriculum, training, and resources to encourage the



“What Classical Education has done for me, and I think the point of Classical Education, is to make somebody who is a well-rounded person who is educated holistically. We don’t think ‘Oh, I’m a math person or I’m a literature person,’ because everyone is going to learn math and everyone is going to learn literature because those are things you need.”

– JONAH

CLASSICAL ACADEMY STUDENT OF THE HILLSDALE
K-12 CHARTER SCHOOL INITIATIVE CURRICULUM

love of learning and respect for knowledge that will serve teachers and students throughout their lives. When VCA is ready to open, Hillsdale will send a team of curricular experts, teacher coaches, and professors who will spend about two weeks with the faculty getting it ready. They are passionate about helping teachers in the classroom.

LOCATION AND ROLE OF AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Veritas Classical Academy will be strategically located in the heart of Chippewa Valley. The Board has researched a number of possible sites including raw land for a building site to former schools and facilities which could be remodeled for the purpose of starting the school to accommodate K-5.

VCA is a public charter school whose authorizing agent is the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO). As such, VCA is not governed by any local school district; it is its own independent school district, funded by state education funding and answerable to the OEO.

WELLNESS FOR STUDENTS

Mind, Body, and Soul

The classical curriculum naturally lends itself to student wellness through teacher-led activities that enhance mental health through individual reflection, group connection, and interaction with adults. VCA places high importance on overall individual wellness by incorporating breaks, outdoor play, physical activities, minimal yet intentional homework, and interventions to support students. The students of VCA will wear uniforms to provide unity, belonging, and

equality to all and contribute to the overall wellness aspect of the school.

VCA will proactively address mental health and wellness and immerse social-emotional intelligence and wellness into the goals of school culture. Focusing on the eight Pillars of Wellness (Physical, Occupational, Spiritual, Social, Intellectual, Financial, Environmental, and Emotional) and additional health-focused practices, the following will be integrated into the VCA culture and classroom to promote wellness and contribute to good mental health:

- Hopeful thoughts
- Gratitude
- A balanced schedule that encourages sufficient rest, play, and brain downtime
- Nutritious and wholesome foods
- Exercise, hobbies and activities
- Active listening
- Leadership opportunities
- Words of encouragement
- Mentors outside of the classroom
- School involvement
- The practice and modeling of forgiveness
- Empathy
- Conflict management training for student and teacher

School culture will include continuing-education opportunities for staff, focused on topics such as personal growth, self-care, and mental health education and skills application.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “VIRTUE”?

The Latin root of our English word “virtue” could be translated as “excellence.” So, virtues are excellences of character. Traditionally, four virtues are known as the Cardinal (or “hinge-point”) Virtues. This is because they are the four from which all other virtues turn or arise. These virtues are Wisdom, or knowing the right course of action in a given situation; Courage, or doing what is right despite being afraid; Temperance, or knowing how much of a thing is enough and avoiding excess and deficiency; and Justice, or giving to each person what is owed to them. A person who desires to cultivate these habits within their soul is said to be pursuing a virtuous life, and this is the life we desire for our students.

HISTORY OF VERITAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY

VCA began in January 2020 when a group of community members with diverse interests and experiences identified a need in the community for additional education choices with options that foster success for a greater number of students. This group, who came to be called the Founding Committee, shared a desire for a richer education for their children and others in the community. One learned about classical schools when his oldest daughter went to Hillsdale College, and he was inspired to bring their classical school pedagogy to the Chippewa Valley. Others were frustrated by what they saw as a failure to address the whole student, in body, mind, and spirit. As they explored options, they returned again and again to the Hillsdale model.

From that seed of an idea, VCA grew into the project described in this Case Statement. The concept of a classical education, with its focus on the liberal arts, character development, and the acquisition of a moral compass, was wedded to a recognition that for this school to be truly equitable, it would need to be a public school, open to all and with no financial barriers. The Founding Committee immersed themselves in learning about charter schools in Wisconsin and explored how the philosophy and structure of Finnish public schools could help them address the needs of students in Chippewa Valley.

By the fall of 2021, the Board of Directors began planning the necessary steps to bring this vision to life. They conducted a public survey to discover what parents and others were seeking and not always finding in the education options available to them. Seven hundred respondents completed the survey, and that information was vital in developing the plan as it exists today.

Initial funding of \$250,000 was raised through a Wisconsin Resource Center for



Charter Schools (WRCCS) grant, in-kind services, and the donations of board members and private supporters. These funds enabled them to complete the first step, which was seeking and finally acquiring a state-approved authorizer who would oversee the operation of VCA and make them eligible for state funding. It also allowed the Board to hire Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC to create a Campaign Readiness Study.

The many steps involved in developing a concrete plan, meeting state requirements, and hiring their first headmaster were more time-consuming than initially imagined, but the group persevered. They have met the challenge and grown in support. Their dream of a high-achieving school that values and enriches the lives of its students is on the verge of becoming a reality.

VCA is now authorized and overseen by the Wisconsin Office of Education Opportunity (OEO). In the spring of 2024, they were awarded a \$1.5M charter school grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for planning and implementation. VCA has selected a headmaster who is contracted to begin in the fall of 2024.

The Board of Directors have begun an intense year of planning in anticipation of welcoming students in the fall of 2025 to a school that will introduce them to their rich intellectual heritage while also addressing their emotional and physical needs as growing children.

THE NEED

Enrollment Trends

The 5-year enrollment trends reported by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in the Chippewa Valley area evidence the need for in-person, free, public schooling. VCA is dedicated to helping their students live truthfully and become virtuous members of society. According to the 5-year enrollment trends from DPI, the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District (CFAUSD) has been experiencing a decline in enrollment and a small but steady increase in homeschooled students, reaching its peak during the COVID-19 epidemic. During the 2019-2020 school year, Chippewa Falls' home-based and private education enrollment totaled 723. DPI statistics show that the number of home-based and private

students totaled 916 in the 2022-2023. That shows a 27% growth rate in 4 years.

Eau Claire home-based and private students equaled 1,636 in 2019-2020. By 2022-2023, the number had grown to 1,667.⁴ The public school districts of Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire show a decline from 2018 to 2023, according to the enrollment numbers on the DPI district report cards. These statistics show that open enrollment is not the reason students are leaving the public schools and emphasize the importance of providing alternative public education models.

Tuition-based, religious education options are widely available, but students lack access to public options, particularly underserved students. Currently, 22 private tuition-based schools serve the local area, and several have waiting lists exceeding 100 students. Free, non-religious options are few and far between, and many also have waiting lists. Based on these trends, VCA has concluded that this is a prime time to offer VCA's innovative education option.

School Space Needed for Growing Population

Chippewa County's population grew 6.7% from 62,646 in 2010 to 66,865 in 2021. Between 2010 and 2021, the county's population grew by an average of 0.6 percent per year. The largest annual population increase was 2.5% between 2019 and 2020.⁵

Always a Need for High-Quality Education and School Choices for Families

There is always a need for the type of education that is taught at a classical academy. VCA will prepare students for life with a rich grounding in the liberal arts and develop both their critical thinking skills and their creativity. Presently, an education of this quality, in a tuition-free and religious-free public school, available and welcoming to all, does not exist in the region of the Chippewa Valley.

⁴ <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards/>

⁵ "Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin Population 2023." Worldpopulationreview.com, worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/chippewa-falls-wi-population. Jan. 2023



“As a parent, choosing the right educational path for our children was one of the most important decisions we faced. Classical education has provided our children with a rich and rigorous learning experience that goes far beyond rote memorization. Through a curriculum steeped in the great works of history, literature, and philosophy, they’ve developed not only a deep understanding of foundational concepts but also a love of learning. The Socratic method used in classical education has encouraged them to think critically, ask thoughtful questions, and engage in meaningful discussions—skills that are invaluable both inside and outside the classroom.”

—LURA-MARGARET

PARENT OF STUDENTS IN 6TH AND 8TH
GRADE AT A CLASSICAL SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE — POVERTY, MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC CRISES

Poverty

According to the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE), Children in Financial Hardship 2022 Covid Report from United Way, 36% of Eau Claire and 28% of Chippewa Falls children live in households that are at or below the ALICE threshold (households that earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford basic household needs⁶). Thirty-eight percent of students are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch.

Mental Health Concerns

Studies show that the broader health and well-being of students is of concern. The National Center for Education Statistics recently released staggering statistics regarding students’ behavioral and educational development.⁷ Of the public schools and parents responding to the survey:

- More than 80% of public schools reported stunted behavioral and socio-emotional development.
- Nearly 50% of the schools reported that, despite a greater need, inadequate funding is a barrier to getting students the mental health services they need.
- More than 35% of parents worry about their children’s whole-person health.

The VCA model differs from that currently offered because VCA focuses on reducing the number of students receiving Basic and Below Basic test scores and increasing students’ reading and math proficiency.

VCA is designed to reduce the achievement gap and increase graduation rates and college/career readiness for educationally disadvantaged students by providing a high-quality, tuition-free, teacher-led K-8 education. The content-rich classical curriculum addresses the increasing achievement gap of educationally disadvantaged students by creating a common ground of knowledge through intentional instruction and then application, which leads to equity in education.

The classical curriculum is a successful model for increasing student achievement. Appleton Classical School, another Wisconsin public charter school, has student achievement scores that exceed state and local district performance. They scored five stars, “significantly exceeds expectations,” on their 2022-23 state report card. Appleton enrolls 19.7% economically disadvantaged and 35% minority student population.⁸

⁶ United Way of Wisconsin, 2024 ALICE County Fact Sheets. <https://www.unitedwaywi.org/page/CountyFactSheets2024>

⁷ Press Release - “More than 80 percent of U.S. Public Schools Report Pandemic Has Negatively Impacted Student Behavior and Socio-Emotional Development - July 6, 2022.” Nces.ed.gov, 6 July 2022, nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/07_06_2022.asp

⁸ WDPI website, School & District Report Cards. <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards/home>



- NATASHA PLANK
VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



“I support Veritas Classical Academy and its mission to teach children “how to think” and substantiate their beliefs and thoughts with what is true, good, and beautiful.

I believe that parents, educators, and students working together to instill a love for learning, develop critical thinking skills, and explore the meaning and purpose in life is how independent, responsible, and joyful lives are built. The classical curriculum and student experience provided at VCA will focus on educating the whole child; body, mind, and spirit, and will serve to develop human character, intellect, morals, and values.

School choice in public education creates opportunities for all, and I am excited to be a part of bringing a choice that is tuition-free with a lottery-based enrollment to the Chippewa Valley.”

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN VCA’S 20-MILE SERVICE RADIUS

Public School Districts	High School	Middle/Intermediate	Elementary	Charter	Virtual
Altoona	1	1	1		1
Augusta	1	1	1	1	
Bloomer	1	1	1		
Cadott	1	1 (combined w/ high school)	1		
Chippewa Falls	1	1	6		
Colfax	1	1 (combined w/ high school)	1		
Eau Claire	2	3	12	3	1 (is a charter)
Elk Mound	1	1	1		
Fall Creek	1	1	1		



“We have been classically educating our children for over a decade, and we could not be happier with our decision. When researching schooling options, we highly valued schools that coupled excellent academics with virtue and good citizenship as we believe they all go hand in hand. Classical schools rely on rich historical literature, proven educational strategies, and leaders of excellent moral standards to instill a love of learning in our children.

–CHRIS & ALICIA
PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN 11TH,
9TH, 6TH, AND 1ST GRADE

PRIVATE SCHOOLS WITHIN VCA’S 20-MILE SERVICE RADIUS (ALL CHURCH-AFFILIATED, TUITION-FUNDED)

School	Location	Grades Served	Choice Students?
Bethel Christian Schools	Eau Claire	1-12	No
Christ Lutheran School	Chippewa Falls	K-7	No
Cornerstone Lutheran High	Chippewa Falls	9-12	No
Crestview Academy	Eau Claire	K-8	No
Holy Ghost School	Chippewa Falls	3-5	No
Immaculate Conception	Eau Claire	K-5	Yes
Liberty Christian School	Chippewa Falls	6-12	Yes
McDonell Central Catholic HS	Chippewa Falls	9-12	No
Messiah Lutheran School	Eau Claire	PK-8	No
Notre Dame Middle School	Chippewa Falls	6-8	No
Otter Creek Christian Academy	Altoona	1-8	No
St. Mary’s Elementary (Regis Catholic)	Altoona	K-5	Yes
St. James Elementary (Regis Catholic)	Eau Claire	4K-5	Yes
Regis Catholic Middle School	Eau Claire	6-8	Yes
Regis Catholic High School	Eau Claire	9-12	Yes
St. Charles Borromeo Primary	Chippewa Falls	K-2	No
St. Charles Borromeo Primary	Chippewa Falls	3-5	No
St. Mark Lutheran School	Eau Claire	PK-8	Yes
St. Paul’s Catholic School	Bloomer	K-8	No
St. Paul Lutheran Elementary	Bloomer	PK-8	No
St. Peter Catholic Grade School	Chippewa Falls	1-8	No
Venture Academy	Chippewa Falls	K-6	No

SCHOOL LOCATION AND SITE SELECTION

Initially, VCA will begin operations from an interim location and then transition to a permanent location after five or six years. Neither location is yet determined, but ideally, both will be centrally located in the Chippewa Valley. VCA intends to serve students living within a 20-mile radius of the initial location, which includes portions of nine school districts and three counties, all of which have similar community needs.

The leaders are actively looking for that first location and are narrowing their focus to a specific yet-to-be-announced site.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

Educational Options refer to pre-college schooling, or pre-employment choices available to students and their families. Although some districts and communities have an increasing number of options available, many do not due to factors out of parents' control.

During a podcast, Andrew Campanella, president of National School Choice Week, said that 40% or more of parents are looking to find a new or different school for their child. "Just as schools tend to differ, no two children are exactly alike. Each child has unique strengths, weaknesses and individual needs. These dynamics should be considered when choosing the best school option for your child."⁹

Why are some schools and students in the area excelling? Certainly, parents who value education and understand the Choice System will self-select to take advantage of these options for their children; those students will benefit from more support in the home. Parents may recognize that underfunded, overcrowded public schools are not going to have the resources to address their children's specific learning needs. Giving students options promotes self-confidence and their ability to make decisions for themselves, improving their educational outcomes.

In the Chippewa Valley region, all but one of the 22 private schools are operated by churches and promote themselves as religious schools. Parents seeking educational options unaffiliated with specific churches have little choice.

THE VCA SOLUTION: IN-PERSON, FREE, NON-SECTARIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLING

VCA will be a tuition-free public charter school that will initially serve kindergarten through 5th-grade students in the fall of 2025. Within six years of opening, it will expand to serve grades K-12.

A charter school is an independently run public school with more flexibility in day-to-day operations and higher performance accountability standards. Charter schools are "public schools of choice," meaning that families specifically choose a school for their student rather than being assigned by a district. As a public school VCA will have no affiliation with any religion.

There are only four pre-existing charter schools within the nine school districts from which VCA anticipates drawing students. Of those, one is entirely virtual, and one is designed to serve students in the Eau Claire district who are either at home and suspended from school or serving time in detention or the county jail, depending on their age. That leaves only the Chippewa Valley Montessori Charter School (enrollment of 302, in grades 4K-5) and the Wildlands Charter School (enrollment of 71, in grades 7-12) offering free public school choices outside the current public school offerings.

VCA will offer parents an opportunity to have a voice and active role in implementing a better model, one that will address the needs expressed by parents in a local survey conducted by the Founding and Design committees.

Over 700 people responded to a community survey to explore interest in a classical charter school and determine what community members saw as the most significant unmet needs in available educational settings. Community members identified three desirable attributes of curricula that are not adequately demonstrated in current options. Respondents wanted curricula that:

1. Support character development
2. Help develop analytical skills
3. Include challenging yet attainable goals

⁹ Campanella, A (Guest). (2022, January 26) National School Choice Week [Audiopodcast]. Retrieved from <https://pioneerinstitute.org/blog/blog-education/andrew=campanella-on-national-school-choice-week/>

With survey results in mind, the VCA Design Team created an education model focused on three core pillars: a classical curriculum, an integrated, whole-person wellness approach, and targeted aspects of the Finnish Education Model.

VCA's mission is to be the best choice for children and families wanting to educate the whole student—mind, body, and spirit. The school will employ a unique approach to education by emphasizing individual wellness and challenging students to excel in the classroom and build character. The teachers and staff devoted to VCA students will know the significance of diving deeper to identify and address challenges that may be a barrier to learning.

VCA will serve a community that embraces school choice with many tuition-based and faith-based educational options. The VCA Founding Committee investigated the availability of current possibilities and found that 22 private tuition-based schools serve the local area, and several have waiting lists exceeding 100 students. Many private Christian schools have opened, and more intend to open in 2025. Heavy tuition and religious affiliation organically filter out those searching for a secular, affordable option. In addition, COVID-19 initiated a homeschooling movement in the Chippewa Falls area, fueling the need for more educational options.

This is *why* VCA chose to open a classical, public, tuition-free charter school – to serve all children. VCA provides a school option that offers (1) classical education, (2) K-8 education adapting innovative aspects of the Finnish educational system, and (3) a pro-active mental and behavioral health component that is responsive to the needs of students and families, addressing the expressed needs of over 700 community members via online survey, conversations, and interviews.

FINNISH-INSPIRED STRUCTURE

Not only has Finland ranked first in the World Happiness Report from Gallup for the last four years running, but the Finnish education system is also considered one of the world's best.¹⁰ The Finnish National Agency for Education's goal is "To support pupils' growth toward humanity and ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life." This goal aligns closely with the mission of VCA, which incorporates several aspects of Finnish education principles.

Replicating Finnish methods will provide students with a high-quality education and encourage them to excel both in the classroom and in character development. Most importantly, the Finns concentrate on the child, not their standardized test scores. Other attributes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Opportunities for teacher and student development and collaboration
- Competitive compensation for staff
- A combination of teacher-led and student-centered learning

The Finnish school system is based on cooperation, not competition through standardized testing. Finnish schools place great emphasis on the basics and on equity. They are focused on the well-being of the whole child, and they expect very high standards of teachers. Educators are highly trained, respected professionals who are well compensated.

Paivi Valli, a university teacher in Finland and consultant to VCA, observes that "the following also contribute to the Finnish success: whole child development, limited standardized tests to gauge learning but not determine potential, concentration on self-improvement instead of competition with peers, teacher autonomy, an emphasis on professional development and more."

"If you only measure the statistics, you miss the human aspect."

—TIMO HEIKKINEN
HELSINKI, FINLAND PRINCIPAL

¹⁰ World Happiness Report. "Happiness, Benevolence, and Trust during COVID-19 and Beyond." worldhappiness.report/ed/2022/happiness-benevolence-and-trust-during-covid-19-and-beyond/#ranking-of-happiness-2019-2021



“A liberal education is an internal activity of the human heart and soul. Simply put, a liberal education is that which equips its students and teachers alike to lead a flourishing life in a free society. As a teacher, it is the greatest pleasure of my life to be even a small part of a child’s journey.”

– AUDREY

5TH GRADE TEACHER, FOUNDERS
CLASSICAL ACADEMY IN LEWISVILLE, TX

FUNDING

Funding for VCA will primarily come from statutorily determined Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) per-pupil payments. **Per pupil payment funding follows the student, which means that new charter schools do not impact Wisconsin taxpayers.** Additional support will come from private and public grants, transportation funding, special education services, food services, and private donations. A lottery system will determine admission to ensure equal opportunity for all applicants.

Charter schools are also eligible for state and federal grants, Title and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds, transportation funding, USDA meal programs, and other aid programs.

VCA will also actively pursue private foundation grants locally, regionally, and nationally. VCA accepts donations from private donors and will remain active in project-based fundraising with its 501c (3) nonprofit corporation status.

GRANT FUNDING

VCA has been awarded a \$1.5M “Planning with Implementation” grant from the WDPI Charter School Program. This grant is based on a large federal grant awarded to the state to increase access to charter schools. This is a five-year grant, with the initial planning year allotment not to exceed \$300,000 for initial staff expenses and training for the planning year only. The remaining \$1,200,000 will be used toward eligible expenses, based on the Wisconsin Uniform Financial Accounting Requirements chart, for the remaining four years of the grant.

- The grant funding can be used for equipment purchases, including technology, initial year or expansion year curriculum cost per new student,

initial year salaries and compensation for school headmaster, administrative leader or business manager.

- The grant cannot be used for ongoing staff salaries and compensation packages past the planning year, consultation fees, teacher and faculty training or marketing, nor can the grant be used for any building or renovation of the existing school space or for leasing.

Appendix A details additional grant funding possibilities.

Government Funding

Wisconsin DPI provides per-pupil funding based on the number of students enrolled and attending throughout the year. Reimbursement rates for the 2024-2025 school year are \$11,729 per pupil per year.

Transportation Funding

The 2024-2025 Pupil Transportation Report is due in August 2025. Based on this data, VCA can request qualified reimbursement through the Transportation Funding Grant by the Department of Public Instruction. Also, VCA estimates that approximately 17.6% of students could qualify for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and/or Title Funding for transportation, and an additional 20% could be eligible for transportation funding under the current definition with an additional .5% increase year-over-year estimate. This money would be used to offset ongoing transportation costs and could possibly be used to secure and expand transportation services. This ongoing funding source will apply to any future expenditure on busing based on the previous year’s student count and eligibility.

Special Education Service Funding

Special education service costs, including services to ELL students, will qualify for some reimbursement from Medicaid, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Title monies. An estimated 17.6% of the student population could qualify (with an additional .5% increase year over year) and utilize services for IDEA, Title I, and Title 3 reimbursements. Medicaid reimbursement is very specific for school services. Currently, VCA has no estimate for this reimbursement category. The specific qualifications must be met, and the reports must be submitted for future reimbursement.

Food Service Funding

VCA will pursue food service reimbursement for students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and snacks, based on pre-Covid requirements. Independent charter schools do not currently qualify for reimbursement for the breakfast program. Because there is no guidance on how long this program will remain in place, VCA chose to budget as though it will be phased out before the school opening in fall 2025.

Reimbursements are submitted per month at the qualified rate (subject to change annually) and are paid monthly, up to 60 days after the submission. VCA

estimates that as few as 33% and up to 52% of students could qualify for free and reduced lunch based on the previous program guidelines and the United Way ALICE Reports for Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties.

THE FINANCIAL RATIONALE

The VCA operation budget is designed to ensure that the most essential pillars of the school are supported - a staff of well-trained teachers, an equipped facility, and a vigorous curriculum.

VCA is committed to offering staff competitive salaries and benefits packages. The VCA facility will provide sufficient spaces to fit all students' learning needs and have a professional kitchen to provide healthy student meals. The budget allocates funding each year for curriculum to ensure that teachers have the supplies they need to help their students learn and retain the coursework. Additionally, the operational budget has funds set aside for community events to engage families from all backgrounds, transportation to help students get to and from school, and student services such as a mental and behavioral therapist. Lastly, the budget includes "pre-funding" to support the next year's growth and provide a buffer for unforeseen expenses.

“



– ADAM KERN
VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“Every child should have the opportunity to receive an exceptional education. Historically, high-quality education was associated with high tuition. I joined the Veritas Classical Academy team to break the status quo by providing children with an exceptional education without the burden of tuition.”

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	\$1,100,00	\$1,000,000	\$700,000	\$700,000
Total Funding	\$1,800,000	\$5,013,19	\$6,045,606	\$6,821,683	\$8,073,85
Expense					
Salaries, Taxes, and 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

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

VCA will work to close the achievement gap, increase graduation rates and college/career readiness, and create a common ground of knowledge through intentional instruction and application, leading to equality in education that deepens learning through discussion. To proactively reduce the achievement gap, VCA will make formative assessments and intervene early in any areas of concern. Early identification

of the root cause will prevent students from falling behind and reduce the dropout risk. To support students’ educational and character success, VCA will create a personalized academic plan. VCA also plans to collaborate with after-school programs, which supply busing, snacks, meals, and homework assistance. As mentioned previously, VCA recognizes if students begin to fall behind or transfer in, VCA will set up proper support systems. Support will include options such as tutoring and intentional instruction tailored

to the student's learning style and include hands-on application. Homework will be focused and time-appropriate.

VCA recognizes the concern that a classical education model can unintentionally create boundaries and restrictions and be a draw for elite students, eliminating diversity and the underserved students. Because an important focus for VCA is addressing educational diversity and responding to students most in need, VCA will balance the rigor of the classical curriculum with the Finnish model of age-appropriate activities, incorporating frequent breaks and activities and working on brain development to help all students.

Behavioral management will be proactive — listening to students' needs and choosing staff who create an atmosphere of safety, respect, and connection. VCA will implement a combination of preventative, supportive, restorative, and corrective discipline based on classroom management and conflict resolution training. The VCA Code of Conduct in the VCA handbook outlines clear and precise expectations, and parents and students sign the Code. By following the models of the Finnish education system and prioritizing recess and breaks, VCA hopes to reduce the misdirected energy and behaviors resulting from boredom.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

The VCA Student Services Department will address the unique needs of students qualifying for a 504, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or other education accommodations. The department will coordinate the work of special education teachers, case coordinators, paraprofessionals, therapists, and specialists who will work together to service students in the following processes:

- When students enroll, their IEP/504 will be transferred to VCA Student Services, and an IEP team will be assigned as provided in Wis. Stat. § 115.78(1m). The team will meet identified needs or reevaluate goals and services/accommodations.
- Student Services will evaluate students without an IEP/504 who need services/accommodations following procedures outlined by the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
34 CFR § 300.111(a)(i).

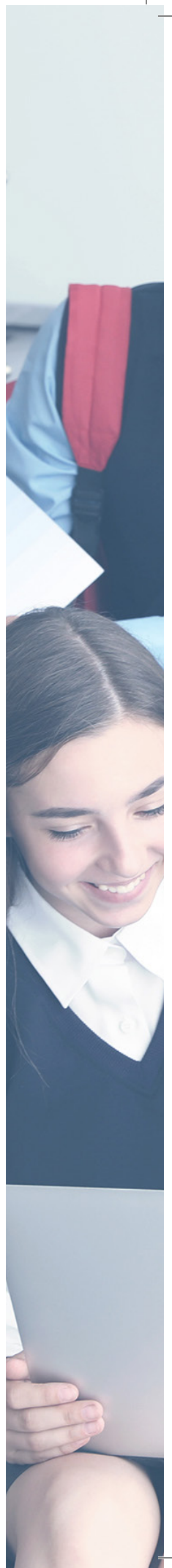
VCA will partner with Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 10, CESA 1, Hillsdale College, UW-Stout, and UW-Eau Claire for additional Special Education resources.

Because the severity of needs will be unknown until students are enrolled and attend class, VCA will continue to evaluate the need for occupational therapy, physical therapy, and additional contracted staff to serve students.

SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

Teachers and VCA leadership understand that students learn best when they engage with learning material in multiple ways. Thus, teachers will reinforce multimodalities in addition to teaching ELL students the vocabulary of the subject matter. Additionally, ELL students will be guided through small group instruction or partnered activities that will serve as additional interventions for the teachers and staff to evaluate student comprehension. VCA teachers will allow ample time for students to answer and will encourage productive language skills, not only receptive skills.

From the outset, Student Services and teachers will welcome ELL students and identify their support and instruction needs. After obtaining parent permission, Student Services will collect information on the student's academic experience and social and family life. VCA will evaluate ELL students and arrange for appropriate support using one of three methods: Language Assessment Scales (LAS), IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test, or Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL).





After the evaluation, the intervention team will create a plan with goals to allow the student to exit/graduate from the program. An intervention scale will be created to assess the intensity of student needs and interventions employed. VCA will intervene in one of two ways:

1. Pulling-out technique: The student is supplied services outside his/her normal classroom.
- or
2. Pushing-in technique: The student remains in the classroom with additional resources to guide and support him/her.

SUPPLYING CHALLENGE FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

VCA will test and evaluate students for advancement in reading and mathematics. When a student has been identified as advanced, faculty and the student's parents/guardians will meet and work together to best address the student's academic needs.

Advanced students will stay at their grade level to remain with their peers and will be offered additional leadership roles and demanding projects and encouraged them to challenge themselves in a spiral learning model for additional work, drawing specific links through all courses of study. In accordance with the National Institute of Gifted Children, VCA will implement each of the advisable best practices: Education Acceleration, Curriculum Compacting, Grouping (placing students of similar abilities together for instruction), Identification (one size does not fit all), and Teacher Training.

VCA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

VCA has chosen performance measures to benchmark the first five years of operation, assess student achievement and determine the charter school's overall success. The performance measures include the following:

- **Reading:** All VCA students, including those who are underserved, will demonstrate an improved level of literacy achievement. A large majority of students will show proficiency or above in their grade level as indicated by evaluation and



assessments chosen by the Headmaster. Students who take the Wisconsin Forward Reading Test will show growth from their fall to spring assessments.

- **Mathematics:** All students will demonstrate math growth. The students who take Wisconsin Forward math assessments will show progress from fall to spring and meet the expected targets established by these assessments.
- **Mental and Behavioral Health and Wellness:** Each semester, all students will demonstrate the Good Habits of Wellness/Pillars of Wellness through a project-based learning experience. The Mental Health and Wellness Counselor will create a rubric for this project, and students must score at least 4 out of 5.
- **Successful School Growth and Expansion Model:** Achievement of goals from Year 1 Planning to Year 5 Full High School Expansion.
- **Teacher Retention:** In evaluating the VCA modeling of the Finnish principles of teacher support, 90% of all teaching staff will choose to return after the first school year to teach again at VCA.
- **Set 1 of Evaluation Measures:** Each year of the charter contract, 100% of VCA teachers will create a professional learning plan with at least two goals based on two student learning outcomes. The Headmaster will review these plans and mark them as complete.
- **Set 2 of Evaluation Measures:** 95% of all teachers will receive a satisfactory or exceptional rating during the Headmaster's second review in 90% or more of the categories.
- **Annual evaluation:** A team of independent third-party education auditors representing Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative will annually evaluate the school faculty, Headmaster, governance board, student academic performance, and school and policy structure. In addition, teachers will be evaluated in accordance with DPI regulations.
- **Annual review of financial audit, business plan, and strategic and long-range plans:** Comparisons will be made to local district budget averages to identify areas of excellence and/or deficiencies.
- **Annual budget review:** The Board reviews the tolerance threshold annually and adjusts it to reflect improved fiscal management practices.

VCA will report progress for K-2 students using a scale of E—Excellent, S—Satisfactory, N—Needs Improvement, and U—Unsatisfactory. For grades 3 and up, VCA will use an ABC grading system.

ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

The Board of Directors, an Executive Leadership Team, standing committees and a Parent Advisory Council will guide VCA.

The sole governing board (Board of Directors) will consist of a

minimum of five and a maximum of 11 directors. The directors will be community leaders and advocates of VCA identified and recruited by the Governance committee, nominated by the board, and elected by two-thirds majority vote of the Board directors in office for a three-year term.

The Executive Leadership Team will be composed of the Headmaster, a minimum of two teacher representatives, additional high-level administration as decided by the Headmaster, a Board Member, and the treasurer.

Several standing committees will meet to help in planning, community engagement and overall success of VCA and report to the Board of Directors. The Board will appoint directors to several permanent standing committees, including a design committee, an Executive Leadership Team, a marketing and fundraising committee, a building and grounds committee, a governance committee, an endowment committee, and a curriculum design and school culture committee. VCA has begun forming these committees, made up of several community leaders, but students, parents and other community members will have opportunities to serve on these committees as well.

The Parent Advisory Council will not include a sitting board member but will consist of parents, community members, and teachers. VCA's success will be proven to parents, guardians, and the community year after year based on enrollment. Ultimately, parents and guardians will be held accountable for their children's attendance.

The VCA Board anticipates that some members of the public may be concerned about the Hillsdale curriculum as politically motivated and with a more conservative agenda. The goal of VCA is not to produce students of any particular political viewpoint but to give students the historical, philosophical, and literary background to become knowledgeable, analytical thinkers.

RECRUITING, HIRING, AND RETAINING VIRTUOUS EDUCATORS

Recruitment

Throughout the Chippewa Valley, there is an amazing pool of educators VCA hopes to recruit. As of 2021,

roughly 800 teachers work within the Chippewa Valley school districts and many more work at private schools. VCA envisions tapping into the strong core of educational leaders in the immediate surrounding area first. The recruiting process for teachers will include a job fair held by Hillsdale College and also will include local, regional, and national recruitment ads. This approach will help garner a large and diverse pool of qualified candidates. VCA will also post job openings and reach out to local, regional, and national universities to recruit student teachers.

A subcommittee may help with relocation concerns and recruitment expenses. All teachers in Wisconsin public schools (including charters) must be certified.

The school does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status. The school acknowledges the increased success of students who are taught by teachers who share characteristics with them and thus will strive to hire those who reflect the community.

School leaders will be chosen based on their ability and qualifications to advance the pursuit of VCA's purpose, vision, and mission.

Interviews

The Headmaster will oversee the creation of a hiring panel to interview and ultimately choose the teachers filling new and vacant positions. However, the Headmaster will conduct interviews and must approve all individuals hired. The hiring criteria will favor those most qualified to guide, teach, and mentor students, acknowledging that diversity can be a unique factor in the classroom experience. VCA has entered a mentor/mentee relationship with Hillsdale College to help in the selection process for the best candidates, specifically for the Headmaster position.

Retention

To retain staff, VCA will invest in its teachers, drive innovation, build talent, and strengthen relationships. The Finnish model of teacher support adopted by VCA includes continuing education, proper compensation, and respect for all staff and faculty.

In the current public school teaching model, teachers are asked to address, assist, and devise plans for mental and behavioral health issues with varied and non-standardized levels of training. VCA learned from conversations with special education teachers that hiring a mental health professional could help mitigate additional teacher stress. Given the opinion of teachers and the mental health crisis in the United States, VCA has determined that securing a mental health counselor for the first year of operation and adding another as grade levels are added are vital.

As a further retention strategy, VCA will partner with Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #6, a third-party vendor, to allow teachers access to the Wisconsin State Teachers Retirement Plan. VCA will offer very competitive salaries and benefits packages, including health and dental insurance and in-house wellness/mental health services. Teachers will have a strong voice in the school culture and representation on the Executive Leadership Team.

Mentor teachers will be identified and paired with younger or new staff for additional support and transition. Continuing professional development funds will be allotted yearly to further each teacher's education. Teacher satisfaction surveys will be administered annually to measure input and provide a continued discourse for improving the work environment. If a teacher chooses not to renew a contract, an exit interview will be held to assess the reasons and supply additional feedback.

SCHOOL ROLLOUT PLAN

Growth Model

VCA offers a tuition-free, public charter school education that will initially serve kindergarten through 5th-grade students beginning in the fall of 2025 and will add one grade per year until the completion of 8th grade. At year six of operation, VCA intends to open a full high school. If there is demand by the community to grow faster than what is planned, VCA will continue to expand and open more grades sooner than anticipated.

VCA designed its growth model with inputs from Dr. Sarah Hackett, the Director of Wisconsin Resource

Center for Charter Schools at CESA 9, to add open seats every year, supplying additional opportunities for students to attend VCA. All current area charter schools and a majority of the private schools (including the private classical schools) have waiting lists with a single opportunity for students to enroll in the school at year one of the school offering.

When determining its growth model, VCA evaluated the number of students who transfer schools after starting middle school and concluded that adding one grade at a time and opening a few additional seats to each grade was the ideal model to address attrition and allow more equitable offerings for students who did not get in on the ground floor.

Year 1 (2024-25)

Begin planning period.

Year 2 (2025-26)

Welcome 240 students in grades K-5 (2 classes of 20 students each per grade).

Year 3 (2026-27)

Add grade 6 and 10 additional seats per grade opened up for a total of 350 students.

Year 4 (2027-28)

Add grade 7 and five additional seats per grade opened up for a total of 440 students.

Year 5 (2028-29)

Add grade 8 and five additional seats per grade opened up. At this point, VCA will have three classes of 20 students per grade, totaling 540 students.

Year 6 (2029-30)

Add a full high school and five additional seats per grade opened up for K-9, totaling 740 students.

The following chart represents the projected student demographics based on the growth model.

PROJECTED STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	[Enter Year of Full Enrollment]
Projected Student Enrollment (#)	240	350	440	540	740	2029-30
Grade Levels Served	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-12	
2.15% Black or African American	5	8	10	12	16	
5.71% Latino or Hispanic	14	20	25	31	42	
7.1% Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	17	25	31	38	53	
0.55% American Indian, Native American or Alaskan Native	1	2	2	3	4	
79.66% White	191	279	350	430	589	
4.83% Multiple or other race, ethnicity or origin	12	17	21	26	36	
39.4% Free or reduced-priced lunch with annual + 1.6%	95	144	187	239	17	
3.53% English Language Learners with annual + 0.1%	8	13	16	21	29	
14.8% Students with Special Needs with annual + 0.4%	36	53	68	86	121	

These estimates are based on student numbers and community demographics from the nine districts within a 20-mile radius of the proposed location in the Chippewa Valley.



“My wife, Sara, and I wanted to start this project in 2019 because we saw a significant difference in the education our daughter received from the local public schools compared to that of her classically educated classmates when she attended Hillsdale College as a freshman in 2015. We also saw the results of a classical education for students when our daughter started teaching at a Hillsdale K-12 school in Texas. Our goal was to create a school where the primary focus was on educating children, empowering teachers, bringing parents back as an indispensable part of their child’s education and instilling a passion for life-long learning as independent, civic-minded, virtuous individuals.”

PROJECTED STAFFING NEEDS

As VCA continues to grow, more teachers and staff will be needed. An outline of the projected staffing model for the first six years of operations follows. The following staffing patterns do not include Student Services personnel, additional mental health professionals, those supporting IEP/504 plans, or ELL services.

Staff Position	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Headmaster	1	1	1	2	2
Teachers	12	15	19	23	42
Teacher’s Aide	0	2	5	5	1
Mental Health Counselor/Coordinator	1	1	1	2	3
Food Service	2	2	3	3	4
Maintenance/Janitorial	1	1	2	2	3
Office Administrator	1	1	2	2	3
School/Career Advisor	0	0	1	1	1
Athletic Director	0	0	0	1	1
Special Education Coordinator	1	1	1	2	3

VCA will identify a group of leading teachers to create a mentorship program to support newly hired teachers and teachers with less than three years of classroom teaching experience. By the fifth year VCA will also consider the need for a Dean of Students, and an additional Counselor. VCA will hire these as necessary and professionally advised. The noted staffing model does not account for physical therapists, occupational therapists, translators, paraprofessionals, or other student support staff. VCA will add these contracted positions as needed.

VCA believes its compensation package is very competitive and will attract qualified educators.

The compensation package was built using the model suggested by CESA #9 and Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools, which includes benefits paid at a family rate. The teacher and Headmaster salaries were developed by taking the average wage of the teachers and principals in each school system from each of the nine districts within a 20-mile radius.

Additionally, VCA will contract with CESA #6 for human resources, payroll services, and assistance in compensation development and implementation so that the teachers and staff will be eligible for the Wisconsin Retirement Fund even though VCA will be an independent district.



– JAMEY DENNING
VCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RECRUITING STUDENTS

Statistics show that 40% or more of parents are looking for new or different schooling options for their children.¹¹ A formal marketing and recruiting plan is in place to spread the word about VCA. The marketing plan includes having a robust Marketing Committee working directly with two prominent local marketing agencies — Daredevil Consulting and Point and Pixel Design Co. These agencies have agreed to undertake the VCA marketing campaign as a joint venture. Together, they will create, plan and execute a full 22-month multimedia branding, student recruitment and awareness campaign to promote public community relations, attract prospective donors and supporters, engage and educate prospective families and facilitate school growth.

VCA is planning to host meet-and-greets, have informational booths at public events, and hold general town hall informational meetings. Additionally, a student/family and community open house will be held annually to showcase the charter, allow tours of the space, provide information, and give guests an opportunity to meet the faculty and staff.

ENROLLING STUDENTS

VCA will select students through a lottery system, which will guarantee equal opportunity to anyone

wanting to attend. When students receive a lottery seat, VCA will also offer a seat to their sibling(s) if openings exist. If not, siblings(s) will be placed on a waitlist with the following exceptions:

- Kindergarten will hold an open lottery every year and not maintain a waiting list prior to the enrollment date.
- Rather than an open lottery, VCA will populate 6th grade from the advancing 5th grade class.

Once students on the waiting list are placed, VCA will offer any available seats in a first-come, first-served lottery.

VCA intends to petition the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association for a single-year waiver for any student-athlete who chooses to transfer to VCA during grades 10-12 so they may maintain their athletic eligibility status. To offer students as many athletic and extracurricular activities as possible, VCA is also developing relationships with co-op schools. A cooperative program is defined as two or more member schools forming a single team in a sport. As interest grows and funding allows, VCA is supportive of independent extracurricular athletics.

¹¹ Klein, Alyson. "Many Parents Now Want a More Personalized, Flexible Learning Experience for Their Children." Education Week, 27 Oct. 2022, www.edweek.org/leadership/many-parents-now-want-a-more-personalized-flexible-learning-experience-for-their-children/2022/10. Jan. 2023

HISTORICAL TIMELINE: SCHOOL OPENING AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Completed July, '22	Authorizer letter of intent converted to an executed contract after first-year funding is secured.
In progress	Viable temporary and long-term school site options located.
Oct. '22 – Dec. '22	Fundraising Case Statement and Financial Rationale developed.
Oct. '22 – June '24	Network of support and interest built through community events, social networks and town hall meetings.
Jan. '24 – June '24	Executive search process for Headmaster (which will include Hillsdale College) resumed. Headmaster selected and contract signed.
April '23	Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative training for Governing Board of Directors conducted.
April '23 – June '23	Capital Campaign Readiness Study prepared.
Oct. '24 – June '25	Capital Campaign conducted.
June '24	Vet and choose the Student Information System (SIS).
July/Aug. '25	VCA full website with SIS integrated.
Oct. '24	Headmaster vetted/approved by Hillsdale College and hired on or before Oct. 1.
Oct. '24	Facility Lease Agreement executed Fall 2024.
Oct. '24	Full contract executed with Hillsdale K-12 Charter School Initiative on or before Oct. 1.
Nov. – Dec. '24	SIS installed and administrator trained.
Nov. '24 -Jan. '25	Marketing campaign for spring enrollment conducted.
Jan. 1 -Feb. 28, '25	Enrollment period begins and ends.
Feb. '25	School open house held for prospective families and community.
March '25	Lottery held.
March 15-April 1, '25	Lottery process completed and students registered.
March- May '25	Staff hires completed by Headmaster.
May 31, '25	Certificate of Occupancy and Safety obtained.
May 31, '25	Food service plan executed.
May 31, '25	Transportation plan executed.
June 30, '25	Strategic Plan for 2025-2026 school and fiscal year created/reviewed.
July '25	Teacher/staff trainings held onsite and at Hillsdale College.
Aug. '25	Welcome to school open house held.
Sept. '25	VCA grand opening occurs.
Oct. '25	Capital Campaign concludes.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DETAILS

Strategic Priorities

Recognizing that growth requires sound strategic decisions and planning, the Board of Directors has developed Strategic Priorities for increasing the organization's capacity over the next five years of operation.

Develop a Diverse Funding System: The Board will establish a robust financial development and fundraising model to continue support for the school.

Capital Campaign: The goal is to raise \$6M to initiate the school's development. The campaign will continue efforts to encourage financial partnerships for ongoing operations and expansions.

Ways to Give

Now is the time to bring the organization into its full capacity and recognize the great need for classical education in the Chippewa Valley. Campaign leaders hope Chippewa Valley leaders will join this effort and consider making a personally meaningful gift, as this project directly impacts the region we all love. Please consider giving an outright gift of cash, stock or pledged gift.

Pledge Commitments

Payments on pledges can be fulfilled by cash, check, commodities, IRA or appreciated property. Donors are advised to consult with their financial advisor if making gifts not by cash or check. Many large corporations offer employee-matching gift programs. The Board of Directors encourages potential donors to check if such a program exists. This is an excellent way to increase both the size and the impact of gifts to the Veritas Capital Campaign.

A Pledged Gift

Pledges may be fulfilled over three to five years on whatever schedule and by whatever method of payment best suits donors' planning. Contribution

installments may be made twice a year. The campaign business office will send payment reminders for set dates. Donors will receive tax-deductible gift receipts for each payment made. By spreading payments out over three to five years, making a pledged gift allows contributors to give at the highest capacity.

An Outright Gift

An outright gift of cash is the simplest and most common way of giving. Outright gifts include appreciated securities, bonds, or personal assets; IRA Required Minimum Disbursements (RMD); real property assigned ownership; or beneficiary status in paid life insurance with cash value (in any single form or combination). Many of these types of gifts hold specific capital gains tax advantages and deductibility.

Donor Recognition and Confidentiality

All gifts and pledges are confidential. Donors may choose to remain anonymous or to make their gifts in honor, memory, or recognition of specific individuals, events, or accomplishments in their lives. They may also choose to have their names, or the names of designated others, displayed on a plaque on a donor recognition wall.

Private Donations

VCA has started strong, thanks to the work of passionate individuals committed to bringing additional education choices for students within the Chippewa Valley. By making a pledge or outright gift of cash or stock, individuals can support VCA's mission.

VCA has broad support because it's a proven model of education excellence that will improve the quality of life in the Chippewa Valley for generations to come. When you are asked to give, please give generously in support of bringing classical education with all of its benefits to the region.

Philanthropy: Greek: "Love of Humanity."

DONOR RECOGNITION PLAN

All contributions of \$1,000 or more to the Veritas Classical Academy Capital Campaign (theme TBD) will be recognized on a donor wall that will be movable to the school's current and future sites.

All 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 may be adjusted according to the final dimensions, 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 - \$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)

*“When you are asked to give,
please give generously.”*

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.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Additional Grant Opportunities

Appendix B: Glossary

Appendix C: Consulting Support

APPENDIX A— ADDITIONAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

VCA is eligible for the Eau Claire Community Foundation's Women's Giving Circle grant, the Access Eau Claire grant, the Royal Credit Union (RCU) professional development grants, and field of interest grants. (The field of interest grant may only be pursued if the operations grant is not funded.) The Access Eau Claire and RCU grant applications are project-specific.

VCA will apply for the New Schools Venture Fund (NSVF) grant. NSVF is a national organization focused on charter organizations launching their first or second school in a new network. Each school is also eligible to receive funding to support the school's first few years of operation.

VCA intends to apply for the Charter School Seedling Fund Grant, a five-year grant awarded by a private foundation to charter schools nationally that are opening or that are less than two years old. The award ranges from \$200,000 to \$600,000. These grant monies are mostly unrestricted and include a tremendous amount of mentorship and training from the grantor organization.

Depending on its rental location, kitchen status, and rental term, VCA may pursue United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants. The USDA offers two different grants to improve school kitchens for lunch programs. One is approximately \$50,000, and the size of the second depends on the amount of the upgraded equipment request, the size of the school, the student population served, and other factors.

The USDA also has a Farm to School grant that ranges in award size from \$45,000 to \$100,000. VCA intends to pursue this grant for the 2025 school year as well as the USDA Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program. VCA will also seek additional food service-based grants, including "Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools" and the Lunchbox Grant from the Chef Ann Foundation.

VCA intends to pursue several sustainability grants:

- For solar from Xcel, Midwest Renewable Energy Association, Couillard Solar Foundation, and the Array Forward initiative.
- For school gardens, including atriums and greenhouses, from the Cool Water Program — Delta Dental of Wisconsin Foundation, Annie's Grants for Gardens, Kids Gardening, School and Community Garden Grants — Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation, Grant Opportunities for School Gardens — Wisconsin School Garden Network Resources and Whole Kids Foundation.

To enhance the music program formation, VCA will apply for the Sharon Gewirtz Kids to Concerts Fund grant. The funds support music education by inspiring middle school string instrument students through direct experiences with accomplished classical musicians.

National and local grant opportunities VCA may pursue include the following:

- National — KaBOOM! Good Sports, Headwaters Foundation, Action for Healthy Kids, Smart from the Start Awards — Together Counts, ALDI Smart Kids Program, Walmart Foundation, The TangerKids Grant Program, The Westinghouse Charitable Foundation, HDR Foundation Small Grants, J.W. Couch Foundation and Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation.
- Local—Technology and project funding from regional lending institutions/organizations, B.A. Mason and private area foundations, foundation education grants, and in-kind donations from local businesses and industries will be sought.

VCA is an active member of the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS) and the National Charter Schools Resource Center and will be pursuing membership in the Innovative Schools Network to ensure the most up-to-date information regarding available grants.

APPENDIX B: VCA GLOSSARY

ALICE: asset-limited, income-constrained, employed

CAM: Charter Asset Management Fund, L.P. (CAM) is a private credit fund that provides short and medium-term financing solutions to charter schools, colleges, and universities nationwide.

CCPH: Chippewa County Public Health

CESA: Cooperative Educational Service Agency. A consortium of school districts uses its CESA to purchase supplies and services cooperatively, keeping costs down.

CFAUSD: Chippewa Falls Area United School District

CSP: The CSP grants to state entities (CFDA number 84.282A) is a competitive grant program that enables state entities to award subgrants to eligible applicants in their State to open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools and to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools.

DPI: Department of Public Instruction, also called WDPI.

ELL: English Language Learner

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) collaborate to ensure educational stability for students placed in out-of-home care, i.e., foster care.

FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education, as defined in Section 504, U.S. Dept. of Education. The Section 504 regulation requires a school district to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to each qualified person with a disability in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person's disability.

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA is a federal law that provides for free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities.

NACSA: National Association of Charter School Authorizers

OEO: Office of Educational Opportunity

Title Funds: Title funds are federal monies meant to supplement, not replace, existing state funding for education. There are five main types of title funds, each supporting specific programs: Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, and IDEA.

WRCCS: Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools

WCSP: Wisconsin Charter School Program

WUFAR: Wisconsin Uniform Financial Accounting Requirements

WSAS: Wisconsin Student Assessment System

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