HAPPY HOLIDAYS, THALES ACADEMY! SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

Midterms, and projects, and tests, oh my! This time of year is an intense ride into the holiday break for our students and teachers/staff, but it is also a time of holiday concerts, parades, homecoming dances, and more at many of our campuses in recent weeks to get us into the festive spirit as well.

We are very proud of our Yass Prize recognitions this quarter—Each and every one of you are part of that honor, for we would not be there without our wonderful Thales Academy community!

Over the winter break, be sure to do your Thales Academy re-enrollment contract(s) if you have not done so already, and if you are in North Carolina, be sure to sign up for the NC Opportunity Scholarship program. We wish everyone a happy holiday season!

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Dear Thales Academy Families,

2023 has been an eventful year for Thales Academy. Classical education has seen renewed interest nationwide, and we continue to expand and improve our curriculum to focus on teaching truth, beauty, and goodness.

Our second annual Fall Classical Summit brought together many faculty and staff from our Thales Academy campuses for learning and fellowship, and it was a great success (See page 6 in this issue for a recap). I also was excited to finally publish a book that has been in the works for many years—The Thales Way. I wrote this book to share the history and mission of Thales Academy, explain the rationale for our educational approaches, and provide standards and methods for teachers, students, and families. I hope this book helps inspire others to pursue educational reform where they can, with their own child(ren) and/or within their communities. You can find the book on Amazon or read a digital copy at no charge directly from our Thales Academy website. I was delighted to see an inspired young man on Book Character Day at one our campuses showcasing The Thales Way as his choice for the day (see photo below). To that young man and his family: Thank you for your support!

Thales Academy has been honored this quarter by The Yass Prize, which is considered the “Pulitzer of Education Innovation.” Initially selected out of over 2000 other educational organizations nationwide as one of 64 Quarterfinalists, Thales Academy then moved on to be named one of 33 Semifinalists, and then competed in the final round this past month. We have been honored to have our educational model recognized as “Sustainable, Transformational, Outstanding, and Permissionless” (their “STOP Principles”) and are grateful for the recognition and the award. (You can read more about Thales Academy’s Yass Prize journey on page 3 in this issue).

We also are encouraged by the expansion of the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship program that gives ALL North Carolina resident families access to funds to put toward private education for their child(ren) if desired in 2024. Action by each family is required to take advantage of this program, so be sure to read the guidelines for doing so on page 9 of this issue.

It was a joy to hear about the career of one of our early Luddy Institute of Technology (LIT) Program students, Micah McKenzie, featured as our Alumni Spotlight (see page 8). We are always delighted to hear of successful outcomes in our graduates. Soon, this will be you, Class of 2024! Merry Christmas, and enjoy your holidays.

Regards,

Bob

Bob Luddy
Founder & Chairman, Thales Academy

"An excellent education should not be unattainable because the financial costs are too burdensome.”

Bob Luddy, The Thales Way
This year, Thales Academy entered a competition that celebrates innovation in education—the Yass Prize. Founded in 2020, the Yass Prize recognizes educational innovators who align with four principles: Sustainable, Transformational, Outstanding, and Permissionless. Thales Academy fits all four of these “STOP Principles”—our model delivers high-quality, affordable classical education. Our education transforms student lives, delivering outstanding results. We don’t wait for permission—we just dedicate ourselves to the work of educating students to fulfill their highest potential.

With the goal of sharing our educational model with others in the nation and potentially creating a positive ripple effect for our students and beyond, we decided to enter Thales Academy in the 2023 Yass Prize contest. The first step was the application, which required a representative to be named, and as Dean of Classical Education, I was asked to serve as Thales Academy’s representative. We finalized the application and determined that if we received the funding ($1 million, or a portion thereof), we would use the funds to expand our in-house classical curriculum publishing organization, Thales Press, which would benefit all of our schools in terms of cost savings and curriculum improvement as well as help others beyond our walls.

In September, we were delighted as we were notified that Thales Academy was selected as one of the top 64 Quarterfinalists out of over 2,000 applicants. Over the coming weeks, we shared various ways we felt Thales Academy embodies the STOP Principles, and another round of judging ensued to narrow down the 64 Quarterfinalists.

In October, I was sent to the 2023 Yass Prize Summit in Cleveland, where we learned that Thales Academy was a Semifinalist. That status meant we won $200,000 and moved on to the final round in the competition which required a live pitch to a panel of judges and the potential to be named a finalist ($500,000) or the grand prize winner ($1,000,000).

In November, as part of the required preparation for this pitch, I completed the Yass Prize Virtual Accelerator. Consisting of a series of online seminars, the Virtual Accelerator included past Yass Prize competition awardee alumni explaining what they had learned through the process. Founder of GSV (an investment platform), Michael Moe, explained the most effective pitching strategies. Vocal-coach-to-the-stars, Roger Love (who listed Brad Pitt as a client), gave us tips on how to project and posture ourselves for success. As the weeks went by, the framework for a solid pitch became clearer, and with prep and practice, by Thanksgiving week, it was time to head to Miami for the live pitch round.

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and I left hopeful that we might advance in the contest. I also left encouraged. Thales Academy is doing incredible work to renew American education, and we are not alone in that endeavor. There are other schools and educational organizations trying different, innovative ways to help children thrive and prepare for their future. In a political season where there often seems to be no good news, I found this experience rejuvenating. We recognize that American education is in a crisis, and there are lots of different people trying to provide answers. We here at Thales Academy have a great answer.

Jennifer Herring and I represented Thales Academy at the Yass Prize Gala in New York City, where we learned that Thales Academy finished the competition as a semifinalist. We did not advance, but I appreciated the chance to share Thales Academy’s vision for education at the Semifinalist Showcase. This was Thales Academy’s first venture into this kind of competition, and ultimately it was a successful one. Thales Academy was in the top 1% of 2023 Yass Prize applicants. Now it’s time to come home, and finish out the quarter!

The Sunday after Thanksgiving, I flew down to Miami for the in-person 2023 Yass Prize Accelerator week (with accommodations provided by the Yass Prize). Some of the other fellow education innovators I met included: Matthew Chaussee, CEO and Founder of Be More Colorful, a virtual reality company that provides students with the ability to see careers from the inside through its CareerViewXR platform; Erika Donalds and Adam Mangana of Optima Academy Online, the first virtual reality charter school in the metaverse; Pastor Joshua Robertson, founder of Black Pastors United for Education, an organization working to mobilize churches to equip families to better educate their children; and many others representing microschools, public schools, Christian schools, charter schools, and more. I walked away from the first day stunned at the level of educational innovation happening in America today. There is no one size fits all. Instead, there are dozens of different models.

On Monday, we met Fernando (“Fern”) Zulueta, founder of Academica, a charter school management company that runs over 200 charter schools in 22 states. On Tuesday, we had breakout sessions with school leaders. On Wednesday, we had scheduled office hours to practice our pitches. On Thursday, I was pitch #9 of 33, and I gave the required brief (and hopefully strong!) live pitch in front of the judges.

By Thursday afternoon, I was on the plane back to RDU. I came to Miami excited about my school,
ATHLETIC PROGRAMS COMING TO THALES ACADEMY CARY, THALES ACADEMY AT FLOWERS PLANTATION, AND THALES ACADEMY HOLLY SPRINGS IN 2024–2025

In addition to being a popular extracurricular for many students, sports offer an avenue for our schools to teach the values of our Thales Academy Top 15 Outcomes and to help students develop important skills outside the classroom. Thus, we are excited to announce that three of our North Carolina campuses will have new athletic programs added next year—Thales Academy Cary, Thales Academy at Flowers Plantation, and Thales Academy Holly Springs. This will bring new Thales Academy teams to compete in our existing athletic leagues that currently include our Apex and Rolesville JH/HS campuses. The new athletic program offerings ultimately will mirror the athletic programs at our existing campuses, including the use of off-campus athletic facilities as needed for sports’ practices and games.

Thales Academy Cary will go up through grade 11 for the 2024–2025 school year (adding grade 12 in the 2025–2026 school year). Dependent upon interest, Thales Academy Cary will offer Men’s and Women’s Soccer and Men’s and Women’s Cross Country next year, with more sports teams to be added in the future as the gymnatorium building is completed. The Thales Academy Cary JH/HS mascot is the Spartan, and the team colors are green and navy.

Thales Academy Holly Springs will go up through grade 9 next year (with an additional high school grade added each year that follows). Dependent upon interest, Thales Academy Holly Springs plans to offer Men’s and Women’s Cross Country, Men’s Soccer, and Women’s Volleyball in the Fall, Men’s and Women’s Basketball in the Winter, and Women’s Soccer, Women’s Softball, and Men’s Baseball in the Spring. The Thales Academy Holly Springs JH/HS mascot will be the Gladiator, and the team colors will be silver and navy.

Thales Academy at Flowers Plantation will also go up through grade 9 next year (with an additional high school grade added each year that follows). Dependent upon interest, Thales Academy at Flowers Plantation plans to offer Men’s and Women’s Cross Country, Men’s Soccer, and Women’s Volleyball in the Fall, Men’s and Women’s Basketball in the Winter, and Women’s Soccer, Women’s Softball, and Men’s Baseball in the Spring. The Thales Academy at Flowers Plantation JH/HS mascot will be the Viking, and the team colors will be maroon and navy.

Ashley Bahor, Thales Academy JH/HS Senior Administrator, comments: “We know sports are a desired extracurricular in the junior high and high school grades, and we are excited to be able to start offering some athletic programs at several more of our growing campuses.”

Students at the Thales Academy Cary, Thales Academy Holly Springs, and Thales Academy at Flowers Plantation campuses will receive more information from their administrators about their new athletic program details heading into the 2024–2025 school year.
SECOND ANNUAL FALL CLASSICAL SUMMIT DRAWS THALES ACADEMY FACULTY & SPECIAL GUESTS TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING & CONTINUED LEARNING

By Keller Moore, Thales College ’25 and Intern, Thales Press

While Thales Academy students enjoyed their fall break’s final Friday in early October, administrators and educators from our various Thales Academy campuses convened for the second annual Fall Classical Summit at our Thales Academy Rolesville JH/HS campus. Thales Academy faculty from as near as Rolesville to as far as Richmond, VA along with some Thales College faculty, our founder—Bob Luddy, and other special guests in the classical ed space, met at the Rolesville campus for a full day of development, networking, and camaraderie.

The event began at 8:00 A.M. sharp with an introduction by Winston Brady, Director of Curriculum and Thales Press, followed by remarks from Thales Academy founder, Bob Luddy. The assembly then heard from keynote speaker, Andrew Zwerneman, president of Cana Academy in Falls Church, VA. Mr. Zwerneman gave a stimulating lecture on teaching history and using the subject matter as a means to promote human happiness and flourishing.

After the morning keynote assembly, the faculty split into two rounds of breakout sessions of various talks related to their respective subjects or general education topics of choice—Trivium teachers listened to helpful practices for teaching Great Books; Science teachers received advice on inspiring students to wonder at the natural world; Art teachers were encouraged to teach the deeper philosophical intentions behind great art; etc. Each talk was given either by a fellow Thales Academy educator or administrator or special guests of Thales Academy who graciously lent their expertise.


After the morning sessions concluded, the Thales Academy faculty enjoyed lunch in groups arranged according to their subject matter for a special networking session, the new teachers learning from the veterans and swapping best teaching practices. Finally, following lunch, the third breakout session series concluded the 2023 Fall Classical Summit, including such topics as: “Impressions of Great Art: Integrating Art and Art History”; “From Quadrivium to Calculus”; “Beauty, Order, & Classroom Management: Structure and Pacing for Lessons”; and “Tragedy in the Adirondacks: The Role of Microhistory in Socratic Education,” among others.

It is a rare luxury for our many campuses to come together under one roof and enjoy fellowship as well as continued learning together, so this was a special event for our Thales Academy community as a whole, not to mention our Thales College and Thales Press extensions. Furthermore, classical educators in general can easily feel stretched thin, alone, and helpless amid their difficult task of developing classical thinkers in our modern world, which is why the Fall Classical Summit is so crucial. Meeting those needs, the administrators and educators of Thales Academy left this year’s Summit more equipped, connected, and encouraged to lead students to wonder at the good, the true, and the beautiful.

See the following page for links to a sampling of videos from some talks shared at the Fall Classical Summit as well as some photos from the event!

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2023 FALL CLASSICAL SUMMIT

(Continued from page 6...)

Video Sampler from 2023 Fall Classical Summit (click links below to view):

- “History: Seeing the Whole for the Whole School” – Andrew Zwerneman (Keynote Address)
- "Receiving the Given: Learning Gratitude from C.S. Lewis" – Josh Herring
- “Classical Education and Philosophical Anthropology” – Peter Forrest
- “Modern Monetary Theory vs. Reality: No More Free Money” – Bob Luddy
- “A Lively Kind of Learning” – Andrew Zwerneman
- “Federal Policies & Higher Education” – George Leef
Micah as a high school senior with the motorcycle he worked on in his Thales Academy senior project

Q. In what grade did you start going to Thales Academy as a student? Which campus( es)? **Micah:** I started attending Thales Academy Rolesville JH/HS in 9th grade. I graduated in 2017 in the second graduating class.

Q. Where did you attend college, and for what degree(s)? **Micah:** I graduated from UNC Charlotte in Mechanical Engineering.

Q. What do you currently do for work, and what is your favorite thing about your job? **Micah:** I currently work as a Design Engineer for the Husqvarna Group, Forest and Garden Division in the Quality of Cut group. We handle all of the research and development for cutting systems for wheeled products in North America. I have projects surrounding deck lift systems, electric decks, snow throwers, and much more. My favorite thing about working for Husqvarna group is taking projects from the cradle to the grave. I get the project from management to generate designs (mental challenge), fabricate (hands on), test, verify, and implement into production. The variety of work is very enjoyable.

Q. In the photo was part of your senior project at Thales Academy....What did you do for that project? **Micah:** My senior project was threefold (since I was in the 2nd graduating class, the rules were not as they are now) containing a senior thesis and a two milestone project. The thesis was discussing work as one of humanity's primary purposes on earth and that it is good for humans to do hard work. The motorcycle project was incorporated in the thesis. The first milestone (minimum requirement) was that I got the motorcycle running. I diagnosed several issues with the ignition system, carburetors, valve timing, and got it running. The second milestone was turning it into a cafe racer. I took the bike completely apart. I edited the frame and customized the engine for weight reduction and power. I fabricated a seat pan for new electronics and made a custom seat from leather, foam, and a skateboard. I cleaned and painted the old to look new and put everything back together.

Q. What are you carrying with you from your experience as a student at Thales Academy that you think will help you be successful in your career? **Micah:** I am carrying many things with me from Thales Academy, but the most helpful things for my career are definitely critical thinking and problem solving skills. Engineers solve problems to make the world a better place, and Thales instilled that in me in LIT, amongst many other classes.

Q. What advice do you have for current students in this year's senior high school class at Thales Academy? **Micah:** Take advantage of your time. That is the resource that cannot be restored. You will never have more time than you do now.
If you live in North Carolina, you’ve been hearing about the expansion of the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship program. Have you created your MyPortal account?

We encourage ALL Thales Academy families who reside in North Carolina to create a MyPortal account as soon as possible. This important step needs to be completed prior to applying for the program on February 1, 2024.

Are you wondering if this applies to your family?

The answer is, yes! On October 3, 2023, the North Carolina State Budget (House Bill 259) became law. The new law authorizes several changes to the State’s Opportunity Scholarship Program, which will begin with the 2024–2025 school year. This means that ALL North Carolina residents who choose to send their child/ren to private schools are eligible to receive funding towards private school tuition, regardless of household income.

If your family has previously been awarded the Luddy Scholarship, please know that if you reside in North Carolina, funds for the Luddy Scholarship will be reserved to support families living in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia who are ineligible to receive the Opportunity Scholarship.

Applications open on February 1, 2024, what can you do in the meantime to prepare?

- Be sure to complete the necessary Thales Academy Continuous Enrollment Contract in OnRecord by January 12 to ensure your child is enrolled at Thales Academy for the 2024–2025 school year.
- Create your MyPortal account now.

If you would like to learn more about the program, visit the Opportunity Scholarship website for more information or contact your campus administrator.

### ALL NC Families Qualify for Opportunity Scholarships in 2024!

**YOUR Action is Required**

- Create MyPortal Account ASAP
- Apply for Funds February 1

**Visit:**
MyPortal.NCSEAA.edu

More info: www.NCSEAA.edu/K12/Opportunity

### HELPFUL LINKS:

- **MyPortal Account Creation:**
  https://myportal.ncseaa.edu/

- **NC Opportunity Scholarship Site:**
  https://www.ncseaa.edu/k12/opportunity/

- **Opportunity Scholarship Questions:**
  (855) 330-3955
  OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu

- **Thales Academy Tuition Questions:**
  admissions@thalesacademy.org
As Roman scholar, Marcus Tullius Cicero, rightly noted, “Gratitude is not only the greatest of the virtues, but the parent of all of the others.” This virtue is of utmost importance to success and happiness in life, and as such, it is a vital outcome in our Top 15 Outcomes.

Gratitude is often described as being thankful or appreciative. However, true gratitude goes beyond saying “thank you” or acknowledging something is appreciated. True gratitude goes deeper and permeates one’s core; for as one focuses on what one has versus what one does not have or wishes he or she could have, it changes one’s whole attitude and approach to life in a positive way. Simply stated, an attitude of gratitude is fundamental to experiencing joy.

However, being grateful at all times is not innate in human beings. It is very easy to fall into envy, complacency, and complaints. Thus, the best way for a person to begin learning gratitude is by observing others who model it. Our best teachers and mentors demonstrate gratitude, and we witness their joy and feel humbled, and we take note. We also are reminded to be grateful ourselves by these same teachers and mentors, and in time, we hopefully feel the accompanying joy within that follows.

Thus, at Thales Academy, we rely on both teachers/staff as well as parents to model gratitude and remind students of gratitude daily. It is not an overnight transformation, and diligence in modeling consistent gratitude is paramount for cementing the habit within each of us and those we encounter. From reminders to say “thank you,” to showing true appreciation for the gifts we have, as well as not complaining about what we do not have and not making comparisons (which is hard to do in the social media age!), it is a cumulative process to both embody and pass down this virtue.

Beyond modeling of this virtue, we encourage gratitude by serving others. At Thales Academy, we perform service projects throughout the year, and our graduates are required to have completed a minimum of 100 hours of community service upon graduation. Sometimes seeing what others don’t have reminds you what you do have, but a smile or remark of gratitude may also be shared by one who is served, reminding us of the positive impact we can have on others. Community service is a wonderful way to instill and promote gratitude and joy.

It is very easy, particularly surrounded by a popular culture that celebrates excess and egocentrism, to lose sight of the good we have and focus on the bad and what we do not have. As a counterpoint, at Thales Academy, we hope to continue to build a strong foundation of gratitude and contentment in our students, all year and every year. This virtue that is as simple or as difficult as an attitude shift has the capability to produce what G.K. Chesterton described as “happiness doubled by wonder,” and we couldn’t wish for more for our students in their lifetimes.
Make pottery like the ancient Greeks!

Create a “blackout poem”

Make pumpkin pie in a cup!

Watch a bean sprout and grow!

Create a chain reaction!

Bring joy to a senior citizen with a shared craft!
2023 CLT10 National Award Winner: Charlie M, Apex

RAAC Conference Player of the Year:
- Varsity Men’s Soccer: Cole B, Apex
- Varsity Women’s Cross Country: Abigail S, Apex

RAAC Tournament Outstanding Player:
- Varsity Women’s Volleyball: Abigail C, Apex

RAAC Conference Season Champs:
- Varsity Men’s Soccer, Apex
- Varsity Women’s Volleyball, Apex & Rolesville
- JV Women’s Volleyball, Apex
- JH Women’s Volleyball, Apex

RAAC Conference Tournament Champs:
- Varsity Women’s Cross Country, Apex
- JV Women’s Volleyball, Apex
- JH Girls’ Volleyball, Apex
- JH Boys’ Soccer, Apex
- JH Boys’ Cross Country, Apex
- JH Girls’ Cross Country, Apex

Inaugural Campus Team:
- Varsity Women’s Golf, Rolesville

RAAC All-Conference Athletes:
- Varsity Women’s Volleyball: Abigail C, Sapna A, Kellyann E, Apex; Lillie W, Addie S, Hayden M, Rolesville
- Varsity Women’s Cross Country: Abigail S, Cameron B, Adeline M, Kenna S, Kate S, Maddie D, Elizabeth S, Apex; Takhmina K, Rolesville
- Varsity Men’s Cross Country: Blake S, Jack O, Carter S, Apex; Andrew B, Rolesville

The Princeton Classic Speech & Debate Tournament Participants:
- Athena K, Divy C, Apex; Chloe C, Grayson L, Maggie W, Drew H, Will H, Rolesville

November Coolidge Debate Tournament:
- Team/Argumentation:
  - Varsity: 1st place: Manav D & Nick S, Apex; 2nd place: Jonathan M, Apex; Grayson L & Chloe C, Rolesville
  - Novice: 1st place: Daria B & Tanya G, Apex; 2nd place: Simrit C, Apex; 3rd place: James M & Christian B, Apex

Inaugural Campus Debate Team Participants:

North Carolina Theatre “Elf: The Musical” Cast Member:
- Asher S, Flowers Plantation
MAKING GINGERBREAD COOKIES!

Gingerbread cookies make great gifts & party food! Try this delicious recipe this holiday season!

Cookie Ingredients:
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup dark brown sugar (packed)
- 3/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 12 Tbsp. butter cut into 12 pieces (room temperature)
- 3/4 cup dark molasses
- 2 Tbsp. milk
- Cookie cutters
- Cookie sheets

Instructions:
1. Mix together all dry ingredients to a mixing bowl and mix well.
2. Add the butter pieces and blend well until mix appears finely ground.
3. Gradually add the molasses and milk and mix in.
4. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate 2 hours or overnight.
5. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
6. Roll out the refrigerated dough to about 1/2 inch thick.
7. Cut shapes with cookie cutters & place shapes on cookie sheets; refrigerate for 5 mins.
8. Bake the cookies 8–11 minutes until softly plump (do not over-bake!); cool on a wire rack.
9. Optional: Make frosting by gradually adding butter, milk, & powdered sugar to a bowl & mixing until smooth. Frost cookies with a knife or a piping bag once they reach room temperature.
10. Store gingerbread cookies in an airtight container with parchment paper between the layers.

What's Up @ Thales?

Limited spaces left at some campuses! After all priority deadline applications are reviewed, others will be reviewed on a first come, first-served basis. Pass it on!

Thales College Spring Open House 3/2: Thales College is hosting an Open House with presentations, tours, and food March 2, 11am-1pm. Register here: ThalesCollege.org/OpenHouse

January 8 – First Day of Quarter 3
January 15 – MLK Jr. Holiday (NO SCHOOL!)
March 8 – Last Day of Quarter 3
HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK!

Happy Holidays!

See you in January for Quarter 3!