

Taipei American School

Head of School Parent Gathering

Learning How to Lead

November 20, 2026

Our Mission

Taipei American School's mission is to cultivate an enduring commitment to **learning**, **personal well-being**, and **service**. We provide a broad **American-based education** with a **global perspective** that develops students of **character** who are **committed** to **making the world a better place.**

Taipei American School



Critical and Creative Thinkers

- Demonstrate curiosity about the world, ask questions, and seek out new information and perspectives.
- Identify and understand problems, breaking them down into smaller components to develop possible solutions.
- Analyze and synthesize information from multiple reliable sources, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions.
- Generate ideas, products, and experiences that demonstrate innovation.



Self-Directed Learners

- Take initiative and proactively seek opportunities for self-growth and development.
- Design a plan to accomplish goals based on priorities.
- Utilize time, manage workload, and complete tasks efficiently with greater independence.
- Demonstrate persistence and resilience using a variety of strategies.



Collaborative Communicators

- Listen actively, considering different perspectives, ideas, and values.
- Articulate ideas clearly and effectively to diverse audiences through oral, written, digital, and creative expression.
- Recognize, understand, regulate, and skillfully express individual emotions, as well as respond with empathy to the emotions of others.
- Take responsibility for achieving common goals through teamwork and shared contributions.



Well-Balanced Individuals

- Prioritize self-care, implement strategies to manage stress, and develop resilience to achieve overall well-being.
- Adapt to changing circumstances, embrace new ideas and opportunities, and learn from experience.
- Maintain a healthy balance between academic demands, physical activity, personal relationships, digital experiences, and interests.
- Cultivate a sense of belonging for oneself and others.



Globally-Minded Contributors

- Recognize, understand, and reflect on how one's own identities shape perspectives, biases, and interactions with others.
- Understand and respect diverse cultures, customs, and beliefs.
- Critically research information on local and global issues and take action to positively impact individuals, communities, and the environment.
- Advocate for inclusive practices that advance diversity, equity, and justice.

What Lasts From School

Knowledge is the foundation. Skills are what we carry forward.

If you sat for your high school exams tomorrow, how would you do?

Knowledge matters. It is the foundation for understanding the world and building new ideas.

But most of us have forgotten **the formulas, facts, and concepts** we once studied for exams.

What we still use every day

- Think critically and ask good questions
- Solve problems
- Communicate effectively
- Work with others
- Manage competing priorities
- Adapt to change
- Persevere when things get difficult

As AI takes on more of the information work, these human capacities matter more: **judgment, trust, and leading change.**

Vision for 2026–27

Co-Ownership and Curiosity

- **From alignment to co-ownership.** Last year we aligned our systems around the Learning Outcomes. This year, every adult owns their part in bringing them to life.
- **Every part of the day teaches.** Students build these skills in classrooms, at lunch, on the fields, and in every interaction, not only through instruction.
- **Ownership starts with curiosity.** Each of us looks at our work with fresh eyes and asks how it helps students live the Learning Outcomes.
- **Students are co-owners too.** The goal is for students to live our Learning Outcomes, not just know them. That starts with giving them a real voice.

Putting Students at the Center

FROM		TO
Making decisions for students	→	**Making decisions with students**
Gathering student feedback	→	**Empowering student action**
Adult-designed solutions	→	**Student-informed change**
Isolated initiatives	→	**Lasting improvements in the student experience**

From Engagement to Agency

What happens when students are not simply participating in their education, but actively helping to shape it?

Doing School

Students follow the rules and complete tasks but lack genuine interest or deep thinking.

Engagement

Students find meaning, purpose, and interest in their learning.

Agency

Students have opportunities to make choices, take action, and influence outcomes.

Ownership

Students take responsibility for the process, decisions, and impact of their work.

Leadership

Students use those capabilities to contribute to something beyond themselves.



Learning to Lead Means Learning to Navigate Complexity

- Diagnose the problem before rushing to a solution.
- Listen, question assumptions, and negotiate across differences.
- Hit obstacles, take feedback, rethink the plan, and try again.
- We prepare students for this work by giving them chances to do it.

Student Leadership in Action at TAS

Student Leadership Retreat

Student leaders from across the school come together to share experiences, learn from one another, strengthen their leadership skills, and explore ways to turn ideas into action. Part 2 of the retreat takes place this week!



Taskforces: Having a Voice in School Decisions

Through initiatives such as Challenge Success, students work alongside faculty and administrators to share perspectives, identify challenges, and contribute to decisions that help shape the school experience.



Tiger Tuesday

Students take an active role in planning and running Tiger Tuesday, serving as emcees, coordinating activities, performing on stage, and bringing the school community together.



Kindness Week

Grade 5 leaders organized kindness activities, Middle School students participated in Homeroom initiatives, and Upper School clubs, including Tiger Mind, Reach Out, the International Culture Club, and Film Club, led efforts to spread kindness across campus.



Student Leadership

Student-Led Events

Students take the lead in organizing schoolwide events, from NHS planning Winter Fest to Student Government coordinating Field Day with student clubs and organizing the upcoming Frolic.



Innovation & Mentorship

Students share their skills and interests to create learning opportunities for others, from TAS robotics students organizing the FRC Taiwan Conference to connect teams across Taiwan, to the Upper School Entrepreneurship Club mentoring Grade 4 and 5 students through hands-on activities and a Shark Tank–style pitch challenge.



Making a Difference Beyond the Classroom

From producing a documentary in Palau and organizing a Middle School food drive to hosting the annual Grade 4 flea market and helping local schools develop robotics programs through student-led initiatives.



Athletics & Arts Leadership

From Athletics Student Council and IASAS team captains building team spirit to theater tech crews working behind the scenes, students lead in many ways. The Art Honor Society brings creativity to campus, while the Performance Union shares music and performances that enrich school events.



It happens when students are trusted to take ownership, make decisions, collaborate across grade levels, and turn their ideas into action. From organizing events and mentoring younger peers to contributing to schoolwide decisions and connecting communities beyond TAS, students aren't just participating in school life. They're helping shape it.

What leading looks like in our Learning Outcomes

When students lead, each outcome becomes something you can see. Watch for these today.

Critical and Creative Thinkers

- Diagnose the problem before proposing a fix
- Analyze survey data and other evidence
- Weigh benefits against unintended consequences

Self-Directed Learners

- Take initiative without waiting to be asked
- Set priorities, timelines, and responsibilities
- Follow through when the work gets hard

Collaborative Communicators

- Listen to students, teachers, and parents
- Work through disagreement toward a shared goal
- Present ideas clearly to adult audiences

Well-Balanced Individuals

- Adapt when a plan or pilot changes
- Learn from setbacks and feedback
- Address stress, sleep, and workload for everyone

Globally-Minded Contributors

- Understand experiences beyond their own
- Build belonging for others
- Take action to improve their community

The full rubric for each outcome is on your table.

At your table: spot the skills

Each table has a rubric of our Schoolwide Learning Outcomes. Use it in three steps.

STEP 1

Before students present

Recall a recent project you did with a group. Which of these skills made it work, or would have? **Mark them on the rubric.**

STEP 2

While students present

Which skills do you see the students using as they share their work? **Mark those too.**

STEP 3

Talk at your table

Where do your marks and the students' marks overlap? **Which skills did leading ask of them?**

Challenge Success projects matter. **Leading them is how students build the skills they will use for the rest of their lives.**

Shaping student outcomes through our strategic priorities

Strategic priorities that create authentic opportunities for students to practice those qualities:

Student Agency

Choices, responsibility, and real influence over outcomes

Belonging

Every student connected, included, and welcome

Well-being

Balance, resilience, and care as the foundation for learning

Engagement

Meaning, purpose, and interest in learning



Challenge Success

How we are bringing this philosophy to life

Dr. Brandon Wiley

Student Engagement Theory

Cognitive

This relates to a student's psychological investment, including their sense of purpose, perceived value of the work, and a desire to learn.



Affective

This refers to the emotional side of engagement, encompassing a student's enjoyment and interest in their schoolwork.

Behavioral

This involves a student's effort, participation, and consistent completion of tasks and assignments.

Student Engagement Theory

Level 1
Disengaged



Students have essentially "checked out" of the learning process

Students rarely or never show affective (interest/enjoyment), behavioral (effort/completion), or cognitive (value/meaning) engagement.

Level 2
Doing School



Students follow the rules and complete tasks but lack genuine interest or deep thinking

Students are almost always behaviorally engaged (doing work, attending class) but rarely or never cognitively (finding it meaningful) or affectively (enjoying it) engaged. They focus on meeting expectations to get grades.

Level 3
Purposefully Engaged



Students are invested in their work and value it, but often experience stress or a lack of enjoyment

Students are almost always behaviorally and cognitively engaged (they think critically and value the work), but rarely or never affectively engaged (they don't necessarily enjoy it, often feeling stressed).

Level 4
Fully Engaged (FLOW)



The ideal level, characterized by holistic investment in learning

Students are almost always affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively engaged. They find the work interesting, put in effort, and find it meaningful.

Challenge Success: Student Voice in Action

- Improving student well-being, belonging, and engagement
- Centering the student experience
- Bringing students, parents, faculty, and administrators together
- Using evidence, inquiry, and collaboration to drive change
- Creating authentic opportunities for student leadership

The questions are complex:

How do students experience belonging?

What makes learning meaningful?

How do we balance challenge and well-being?

**Rather than assuming adults have all the answers,
we invite students to help investigate and address these questions.**

From Listening to Leading

Throughout the last year students have been translating findings into action.

Spring 2025

Surveys to students, parents, and employees

Summer 2025

Review of data with administration

August 2025

Training and development with Brandon Wiley, Challenge Success team

September 2025

Challenge Success Conference

October 2025

Formation of TAS Divisional Teams and first meetings with Brandon Wiley

Fall 2025

Divisional teams reviewed data, investigated priorities and developed initiatives

Spring 2026

Student-led pilots, research, and recommendations

Fall 2026

Continued student leadership, evaluation, and institutional adoption



What We did, What We learned & What Comes Next

Lower School · Middle School · Upper School

Lower School Challenge Success Presenters

Riley H.
Class of 2034



Leo Z.
Class of 2035

LOWER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Our First Year: What We Did and Learned

Our focus: helping every student feel connected and included at school.

Listening to Students

500 students in Grades 3–5 took our belonging survey

- Most students feel they belong at recess.
- Recess and lunch can still be hard for some.
- Next time: ask about hobbies and interests at the start of the year.

Including One Another

900 Lower School students watched our Grade 5 inclusion video

- How to invite someone to join you — and how to ask to join.
- Grade 3 added a Four Square how-to video.
- One video isn't enough; students need regular reminders.

More Recess Choices

3 new recess anchor zones explored

- Tiger Garden, Upper Field, and Zone 1.
- More places to go means more ways to find your people.

LOWER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Our Second Year: What We Are Working On

Our team has grown — and split into four working groups.

8 students (up from 4)

2 parents

4 teachers

1 administrator

GROUP 1

Recess Review

Build a menu of recess activities and recommend 1–2 changes so more students feel included and have choices.

GROUP 2

Inclusion Messages

Turn the video's key phrases into posters, and explore a Challenge Success news video with student interviews.

GROUP 3

Student Surveys

Use the new belonging dashboard with counselors and administrators, and find ways to hear from PreK–Grade 2.

GROUP 4

Family Engagement

Learn from the Fall Fair "I wish others knew that..." wishing bowl, then recommend 1–2 activities that bring families and school closer.



LOWER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Looking Ahead

Making our ideas part of everyday school life

- Turn what we've learned into positive changes in the Lower School.
- Explore how our new cafeteria can help students feel they belong and give people more time together.
- Keep listening, sharing ideas, and working together.

Middle School Challenge Success Presenters

Hailey K.
Class of 2031

William T.
Class of 2031







Jun Ming Y.
Class of 2031

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Last Year: Building a Team, Testing Two Pilots

SEP — Formed the team

OCT–NOV — Analyzed survey data

DEC–JAN — Brainstormed solutions; Dr. Wiley's fishbowl

FEB–APR — Launched two pilots

MAY — Reflected, celebrated, planned ahead

We gathered data on both pilots to see what worked.

PILOT 1

Cross-Grade Homeroom Partnerships

Older and younger homerooms paired up to build relationships across grades.

PILOT 2

Social Spaces Audit

Mapped where students feel they belong — and where they might feel unsafe — then focused on adding comfortable spaces and creating norms for bathrooms and locker rooms.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

What We Learned

Comfy spaces were a hit. Outdoor spaces were not. The difference taught us a lot.

01

Belonging is connected

Belonging, engagement, and well-being rise and fall together — you can't work on one without the others.

02

A team has to know each other

This work needs close collaboration, so time spent getting to know one another is time well spent.

03

Listen more widely before you build

We studied what made the comfy spaces work — location and furniture — and realised we need input from many more students, and many different groups, to understand why the outdoor spaces didn't.



MIDDLE SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

This Year: Engagement in Class

Engagement is still our focus — now inside classes, too

- Continue homeroom partnerships and hand them off to the Homeroom Committee.
- Expand the places students can go during breaks, and make sure they fit students' needs.
- Shift part of our focus to what's happening with engagement in classes.
- Get input from all students on what works for them in class, especially with our newish schedule.

Upper School Challenge Success Presenters

Jeffrey H.
Class of 2028





June P.
Class of 2030

UPPER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Last Year: Three Pilots, Encouraging Results

Students told us their top concerns: stress, advisory, sleep, and grade visibility. We tested three responses.

Advisory Survey

634 students and 43 faculty surveyed, then two fishbowl focus groups

- Findings handed to the incoming Dean of Student Life.

Recharge Zone

~70 students a day in the US Library

- Largely positive feedback from students.

Grade Transparency

65% of students reported lower stress

- One course per department shared cumulative grades after every summative.
- 100% of participating faculty want to continue.

UPPER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

This Year: Grounding Our Work in Evidence

After an October student fishbowl with Dr. Wiley, we chose three focus areas for 2026–27.

9 students | **5** faculty | **2** parents

Each sub-team is interviewing students, teachers, and parents, so our pilots rest on evidence rather than anecdotes.

FOCUS AREA 1

Workload Coordination

FOCUS AREA 2

Competing Commitments & Pressure

FOCUS AREA 3

Student Voice & Adult Response

SHARING OUR WORK THIS MONTH

- Faculty meeting presentation
- Grade 9–12 class gatherings, November 17 and 19
- Letter in the Parent Post



UPPER SCHOOL CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAM

Looking Ahead

Student voice at the center of every decision

- Use well-being, engagement, and belonging as our lens, and surveys, fishbowls, and interviews as our evidence.
- Build on last year: support the advisory review, explore new Recharge Zone locations, and follow how grade-visibility practices are adopted.
- After Thanksgiving, design one or two small, testable pilots per focus area, each with an owner, a timeline, and evidence checkpoints, and run them in the spring.
- Share findings at the end-of-year cross-divisional celebration to inform planning for 2027–28.

Student Panel with Head of School





What did you learn from listening to other students that changed how you understood their experiences or what our school needs?



What did this experience teach you about yourself as a leader? What challenged you, and how did you respond?



What did you learn about what it takes to turn an idea into meaningful change that makes our school better for others?

Step 3: Talk at your table

Compare the skills you marked for yourself with the ones you saw the students use.

QUESTION 1

Where they overlap

Which skills did you mark for both yourself and the students? **Circle the overlap.**

QUESTION 2

What leading asked

Which skill did the students need most to lead their projects? **Pick one as a table.**

QUESTION 3

Where it goes next

Where could your child practice that skill this year, at school or at home? **Share one idea.**

Before we close: **each table shares the one skill it picked with the room.**



Observation & Discussion

From Student Leadership to Lasting Change

Student voice informs school decisions

→

Student-led initiatives create opportunities for authentic learning

→

Successful pilots become lasting school practices

→

Each generation of students builds upon the work of those before them

→

The student experience evolves through shared ownership

Student agency and leadership is helping us become a better school — and when student-led ideas inform lasting practices, we show that their contributions matter.


THANK
YOU

Register for our next Parent Events!

- Register for these opportunities in advance through the page at the QR code.
- Bookmark this page for future updates and opportunities.
- Updates and reminders will be shared via email and Parent Post.