

# GREAT MINDS *don't (have to)* THINK ALIKE

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St. Timothy's School gives new meaning to the word *diverse*. With a student population of 200 students from across the socio-economic spectrum, the School is fully one-third international. Represented on campus are 29 countries, perhaps a dozen languages and most of the world's great religions. Students come from 15 states across the U.S. – from the bluest blue to the reddest red. St. Timothy's is, as Edie Tepper '17, Lexington, Kentucky, describes it, a “miniature United Nations.”

Today, a key differentiator for the School is the international focus of the entire learning experience. Given the rapid rise of globalization, it makes sense that future challenges will require increasingly global responses. Leaders in such a world will need to be culturally aware, comfortable with change and good at listening.

It is widely accepted that, due largely to rapid technological change, many key professions of the near future have yet to be invented. What kind of education is the best preparation for such a world? St. Timothy's students bring a wide range of viewpoints and backgrounds to an environment that helps them sharpen even further their global perspectives, their ability to question assumptions, to grow and adapt. How do St. Timothy's students view the world? How have those views changed since coming to the School? How is this education preparing them for the world they will inherit? Listen to their voices.

#### Greetings from around the world

“I am Autumn Chiu. I was born in 1998 in a small town at the edge of the most famous tea mountains in Taiwan. My grandfather, grandmother, mother and father are all teachers. My grandfather and mother dedicated their lives to the education of English in Taiwan. My mother introduced Model United Nations to the southern region of Taiwan, believing that a wider view of the international world could increase our maturity and compassion. I believe that too.

“I spent my early childhood years recording English videos that taught reading and writing. My grandfather would take these videos up to small villages in the tea mountains to play for elementary children when they did not have teachers. I want to return to my hometown, to bring resources and better education into the rural Taiwanese mountains. My dream is to become an educator, to help people my age receive the best education and have the ability to dream something big.”

“My name is Cameron Payne. I'm from Charleston, West Virginia, and I'm a Five. I am a Christian who believes in more than just the literal translation of the Bible. I am a student who loves to teach. I was a victim of the one-story point of view. But now I am very open-minded. I am a feminist who believes in gender equality. I am so much more than words on a page or an idea in

someone's head. I dream of a bright future but I live in the moment.

“I came here from a public school in West Virginia where few of my peers cared about education. Here, all of my fellow students care deeply. Because of St. Timothy's, I am connected to people from Korea, Turkey, the Cayman Islands and all throughout the U.S.”

“My name is Khawla Ismail-Abderrezaq, and I am a Six. I was born in Wisconsin, where my father was a professor at the University of Wisconsin. My family moved to Saudi Arabia 13 years ago, when I was four years old. Before coming to St. Timothy's, I went to international schools in Saudi Arabia beginning in first grade, where I met people from all over the world. I am the oldest among four sisters, and I have two brothers. My hope is to become a dentist.

“I have always attended international schools, and I have come to appreciate many other cultures. At St. Timothy's, I've also become more independent and self-confident because here, you are free to express your opinions. I think that both Americans and Arabs have misconceptions about one another, even though we all share the same human characteristics and emotions. These misconceptions will only begin to disappear through dialogue and communication.”

#### Let she who has ears...

Students arrive at St. Timothy's from very different backgrounds. Christian, Muslim, liberal, conservative. They come from traditional societies and progressive families. In class and around campus, those backgrounds come to the fore in a lively mix of ideas and points of view. The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, which emphasizes questioning and critical thinking in a global context, inevitably encourages more finely developed listening skills. Here's how Duru Tasman '18, Istanbul, Turkey, explains it.

“I come from Turkey. I am an independent woman. I want my life to have meaning by being happy and sharing happiness with others. Turkish culture is very rich in many ways. But at home, I have seen, known and felt many things because of war and terror. I know how people can be cruel. I strongly believe that we should educate for peace.

“The international environment and IB curriculum here help you learn how to listen. You learn to listen to different perspectives, emotions and ideas. Here, there are many perspectives – boarders, day students, Americans, international students – and we all listen to each other. The most important thing St. Timothy's has taught me is listening.”

And, the better the listener, the more opportunity for understanding, something Sage Block '18, Charlottesville,

Virginia, learned last year. “I was good friends with a girl from Mexico, a very Catholic country. I believed that if you're against abortion, you're denying the right to choose. But for her, it was different. We talked about it in biology because we were debating stem cell research.” For Sage's friend, “abortion and the right to choose are deeply religious issues,” she explains. “That opened my eyes to the fact that it's not just about politics. It's also about your belief in God and your faith.”

In 2016, the IB program at St. Timothy's was expanded to include the Middle Years Program (MYP), a complementary curriculum that prepares 9th and 10th graders for the rigors of the IB in their junior and senior years. For freshman Paula Pizzuto, a United States citizen born in Dallas, Texas, who has grown up in Mexico City since her family returned there when she was three years old, St. Timothy's has changed her definition of success. “I always thought it meant finishing college, finding a job, making money and having a family,” she says.

However, engaging in discussion and listening closely to others with different opinions and global viewpoints has shown her a deeper meaning. After just a short time here, she says, “I realized that being successful doesn't mean having a lot of money and a good job. Success is being happy. The most successful people are the ones who can adapt to any change they face in their lives.”

Today, the entire St. Timothy's student body is engaged in a daily (and nightly) discussion of culture, values and truth. As Head of School Randy Stevens says, “an open community really means that you listen to different points of view. A fundamental principle of the IB is that *you* don't have to be wrong for *me* to be right. You don't have to give up your own culture or faith to know others.”

#### A “miniature United Nations”

For some students, the School's international community can at first seem intimidating. Emily Burney, a junior from Waco, Texas, says, “it was a sizeable culture shock for me. People talked openly about their nationalities. We never did that at home, and I didn't know how to react. Now, I am able to speak more candidly about things that would have polarizing effects at home. That's a benefit that comes from being here.”

Born in Vietnam, Evita Ngo '18 lived with her family in Sweden for five years. Before coming to St. Timothy's, she says, “I was in a French school since kindergarten.” French culture runs through her veins, “but that does not change the fact that I am Vietnamese. And to be honest, I like not knowing who I am. I want to live my life as a mysterious adventure, finding treasure chests with pieces of me in them everyday.” From St. Timothy's, she says, “I learned to be patient, to work hard and to make the best out of the opportunities you are given.”

One of the main reasons Louisiana native Bea Harley '19 came to St. Timothy's was the equestrian program. She quickly found a home, and more. “Here, you meet people from China, from different places in Africa and Europe,” she says. “I'm studying Mandarin, and I can practice with my Chinese friends and classmates.” It has helped her focus on issues of the larger world. “A big problem that our generation is going to have to face is discrimination. I think we are going to have to be the ones who finally say, ‘Enough. It's okay. We're all people.’”

The discourse is richer here, she says, the discussion broader. “In my classes we hear views from people who come from all around the United States and the planet,” she says. “We get different perspectives on current events in America and the world.”

For others, the international feel was the draw from the beginning. According to Johanna “Jojo” Sosa, '17, Rahway, New Jersey, “the other high schools I considered were similar to what I was used to. That would have been the conventional path for me to take.” Instead, she came to St. Timothy's “to be with a diverse group of girls coming from different countries, different religions, different cultures. I could never have conceived of being part of a community so rich,” she says.

According to Cora Martin '17, Kansas City, Missouri, “when I came to St. Timothy's, I was assigned roommates from Haiti, India, Vietnam and Afghanistan. I thought, ‘Wow, there may be some major culture clashes.’ But I was completely wrong. It made me realize that even though we have different cultures, different beliefs, even different languages we're all about the same.”

Even among students who are familiar with international schools, there is something unique about St. Timothy's, a shared purpose and seriousness of intent, a sense of mission. As Edie Tepper explains, “whenever friends back home ask me about my experiences bonding with people from different cultures, I compare the School to a miniature United Nations. We're here with people from all over the world solving problems within our community. The ability to say, ‘your opinion is different from mine. Let's compromise,’ or, ‘I need to understand what your opinion is,’ is very important in today's world. There are many differences that we cannot overcome until we have a similar understanding, or can comprehend why someone else feels the way they do.”

*Engaging with people  
who are different  
from you, and giving  
serious thought  
to what they have to  
say, is one of the  
most valuable things  
you can do.*



Bringing Scholars from **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**  
Creates Hope for **A BETTER WORLD**



1. *Naomi Brown*  
CALIFORNIA,  
UNITED STATES

2. *Alayna Tillman*  
ARKANSAS,  
UNITED STATES

3. *Cora Martin*  
MISSOURI,  
UNITED STATES

4. *Zamora Gaston*  
ILLINOIS,  
UNITED STATES

5. *Edie Tepper*  
KENTUCKY,  
UNITED STATES

6. *Cameron Payne*  
WEST VIRGINIA,  
UNITED STATES

7. *Elizabeth Casa*  
NEW YORK,  
UNITED STATES

8. *Johanna Sosa*  
NEW JERSEY,  
UNITED STATES

9. *Katie Harvey*  
MARYLAND,  
UNITED STATES

10. *Daysiana Godbee*  
DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA,  
UNITED STATES

11. *Sage Block*  
VIRGINIA,  
UNITED STATES

12. *Alley Milam*  
NORTH CAROLINA,  
UNITED STATES

13. *Krista Rannik Carias*  
SANTO DOMINGO,  
DOMINICAN  
REPUBLIC

14. *Annabelle Davies*  
GRAND CAYMAN,  
BRITISH WEST  
INDIES

15. *Natalia Pena*  
FLORIDA,  
UNITED STATES

16. *Ronelle Williams*  
GEORGIA,  
UNITED STATES

17. *Paula Pizzuto*  
MEXICO CITY,  
MEXICO

18. *Bea Harley*  
LOUISIANA,  
UNITED STATES

19. *Emily Burney*  
TEXAS,  
UNITED STATES

20. *Milena Ibarra*  
BAVARIA, GERMANY

21. *Stasa Kneselac*  
BELGRADE, SERBIA

22. *Duru Tasman*  
ISTANBUL, TURKEY

23. *Natalia Boumatar*  
BEIRUT, LEBANON

24. *Zahra Jafari*  
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

25. *Sana Hassan*  
SARGODHA, PAKISTAN

26. *Lucia Lu*  
SHANGHAI, CHINA

27. *Emma Lee*  
CHUNGNAM,  
SOUTH KOREA

28. *Saki Nakayama*  
TOKYO, JAPAN

29. *Autumn Chiu*  
TAIWAN,  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA

30. *Evita Ngo*  
HO CHI MINH CITY,  
VIETNAM

31. *Khawla Ismail-Abderrezaq*  
DHAHRAN,  
SAUDI ARABIA

32. *Martha Kamikazi*  
NAIROBI, KENYA

33. *Angel Nkwain*  
YAOUNDE, CAMEROON

34. *Alero Oyinlola*  
IBADAN, NIGERIA

35. *Victoria Asiedu*  
ACCRA, GHANA

36. *Maria Gutierrez Alos*  
MADRID, SPAIN

Such self-awareness can be empowering to a young woman seeking her way in a complex world. Pakistani student Sana Hassan '17, who has also attended schools all over the world – from South Korea and Saudi Arabia to Qatar and Maryland – has felt that benefit for herself. “St. Timothy’s has given me great confidence. It’s made me understand the idea of feminism, that women are good enough to do anything a man can do.”

Zamora Gaston '17 says, “before St. Timothy’s, I had never met people of different cultures in an academic setting. I live in the south side of Chicago so we’re all the same color. The community where I live in Chicago has many different African diasporas represented – people from Nigeria, Cameroon and of course African Americans. But this was the first time that I could actually get to know other people’s cultures.

“I used to think that America had the best culture because it’s a mix of things. But getting to know these other cultures, I’ve learned that some things get lost in a melting pot. To get the feel of another culture directly from the source is really powerful.”

Angel Nkwain '17, Cameroon, recalls growing up in a homogenous culture. “In Cameroon, you’re surrounded by the same types of people. Then I came here.” Her American middle school “was not that diverse,” she explains. So when she came to St. Timothy’s, “I was so happy to discover people who are similar but from such different cultures. Here, I’m learning about Africans from Ghana and Nigeria. My roommate is Korean. We watch Korean dramas together. We find things that we can relate to with each other. At St. Timothy’s, you live that diversity everyday.”

Paula Pizzuto believes that the only thing holding her generation back is a lack of confidence. “Kids my age are limiting themselves,” she says. “A friend of mine wanted to go to school outside of Mexico, but with the recent U.S. election, she feels she cannot do it. These things should not stop us from traveling and continuing to engage in the world. We need to challenge things we believe are wrong and not limit ourselves because of fear,” she explains.

What has she discovered at St. Timothy’s that has most shaped her worldview? “I never realized how different life is in different countries,” she says. “Knowing all these different kinds of people gives me more hope for the world.”

Discovery takes many forms among students. The School opened Emma Lee’s eyes to a world of graphic design and advertising. The senior from Seoul, South Korea, says, “we looked at different styles of advertising from other countries to learn about different countries. I was amazed to see how global companies like Apple, Coca Cola and Chanel cater their advertising to different countries and values. It gave me a new perspective on how advertising works.”

Still, Emma has concerns about technology and its impact on job opportunities. “I appreciate how technologies are being developed to make our lives easier,” she says. “However, because of technology, there are less and less jobs for young adults, especially in Korea.” Emma is right. The rise of robotics is driving manufacturing efficiency upward even as it wipes out traditional jobs. Perhaps even more alarming, artificial intelligence (AI) technology is predicted to overtake human intelligence in as little as 15 years, according to Google chief futurist and AI visionary Ray Kurzweil. St. Timothy’s students are expected to consider carefully the future they will help shape. “I worry that I won’t be able to use my knowledge and skills from high school and college,” Emma says.

Krista Rannik Carias '17, a dual citizen of the United States and the Dominican Republic, is concerned about the future of the planet, and she has become a vocal advocate for protecting the environment in her years at St. Timothy’s. At home, she saw firsthand the devastation caused by recent hurricanes and flooding in the country’s poorer parts. “I understand what it’s like not to treat the environment correctly,” she says. She sees the dismissal of science in the name of economic growth and development as alarmingly shortsighted and a cause for great concern. “So, it’s important for young people like me to advocate for the environment,” she explains. “It inspires me to inspire others and to wake up and love the Earth.”

Martha Kamikazi '17, a Rwandan who has lived most of her life in Kenya, says, “the brain has always fascinated me. I also have a passion for helping less privileged children in terms of health care and education, and I am eager to merge these aspirations in my career.” In Martha’s eyes, the value of the St. Timothy’s education is how “exposure to others from around the world with dreams and aspirations strengthens my own determination to help less fortunate children. I want them to feel empowered to realize their dreams, just like I have been empowered.”

### The IB and the global citizen

St. Timothy students connect curriculum with current events, global trends with daily classroom discussion. They are connecting what they learn with who they are becoming – women living in *truth without fear*. “I think the curriculum encourages a growth mindset,” says Jojo Sosa. “Not only in the classroom but outside as well.” As Baltimore, Maryland, resident Katie Harvey '17, explains, “a growth mindset is more a way of thinking than a specific path. Here, we’re encouraged to think of failure as an opportunity to grow, not something that slows you down or stops you. It’s that idea that there are multiple paths to the same goal.”

Alero Oyinlola '18, Ibadan, Nigeria, adds, “even though they’re teaching and preparing us for an exam, the IB itself requires you to reach beyond that. You are not just trying to understand ‘how;’ you also explore ‘why.’ You can question your teachers, and you can have theoretical debates on why things are and what perspective they are coming from. That has helped me become more of a global thinker, more open-minded to different ideas.”

Adds Bailey Creamer '18, Baltimore, Maryland, “I think that the IB is great, because if you have an answer and can explain well enough why you think it’s right, then it is right. And like Alero said, we have these amazing discussions that connect what we’re learning in the classrooms with what’s happening today.”

“Learning the difference between alternative viewpoints and equally opposing ideas is complicated,” says Randy Stevens. But the purpose of a St. Timothy’s education, he continues, is to face such challenges. “One of the greatest barriers to rational deliberation in politics is the unexamined feeling that one’s own preferences and ways are ‘neutral’ and ‘natural,’” he explains. “By looking at ourselves through the lens of the other, we come to see that which we more broadly or deeply share. If we do not undertake this kind of educational process, we risk assuming the options familiar to us are the only ones there are. We repeatedly remind our students that ‘extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.’ Given the period of history in which we find ourselves, this has never been more true.”

### Hope for a better world

Whatever one makes of the current state of the world, there can be little doubt that these are times of seismic global change. For some, change is hard. For others, it is a call to action. Immersing young women in opportunities for greater understanding across cultures helps prepare them for uncertain times ahead. And there is good reason to hope.

“I am hopeful for the future,” says Stasa Kneselac '18, Belgrade, Serbia, “and I have a lot of faith in our generation. When I talk to older people, they sometimes say things like, ‘I’m so sorry for what our generation has done to yours.’ But we’re not going to be those people. We are going to make younger generations thank us for what we’ve done.”

No matter where students come from, at St. Timothy’s they discover an environment that invites reflection on their cultures and inspires them to work toward a better world. For Zahra Jafari '17, Kabul, Afghanistan, that exploration has helped her gain new pride in her war-torn homeland. “The greatest pride I have in my country is of the courage that the new generation has shown in the fight for equality and justice,” she says. “Although people

are scared for their lives, they are still protesting. The courage and hope that people have kept in themselves after so many years of chaos in the country is an inspiration to me.”

“This is not the United States that I thought I was coming to,” says Alero. “I thought I’d be coming to a more stabilized place, not a country divided.” But that has only heightened her passion to work in the U.N. and toward a world that’s more understanding. “We don’t need to be as divided as we are today,” she says.

To Japanese student Saki Nakayama '19, the openness of learning and questioning at St. Timothy’s has helped her gain confidence and a more universal appreciation of humanity. “When I was in Japan I was too shy to express myself or ask questions,” she says. “St. Timothy’s students always ask questions, however, and they try to explain their ideas.” That openness has led Saki to understand that “all countries have smiles and kindness in common.”

Sage Block sees hope in justice. “My family has always talked about the difference between injustice and justice,” she says. “My dad’s a lawyer and works with a nonprofit for kids who couldn’t normally afford lawyers in the juvenile justice system. If we want a brighter future, we have to acknowledge that there is injustice in the world, and then we have to do something about it.”

St. Timothy’s is an international melting pot of ideas and personalities. But it is also a community. The impact of the experience of studying and living here goes even deeper on that personal level. As Lizzie Casa '17, New York City says, “of the many different people representing many different backgrounds here, one whom I truly admire is my friend from Haiti. I have learned that in Haiti, your family’s opinion is a matter of extreme importance. This made me think about my family dynamic and how I can apply these values to my relationships with family members. It reminds me that differences should be embraced, that different cultures should be celebrated.”

There are as many points of view and responses to world events among St. Timothy’s students as there are students themselves. But the School is committed, no matter what, to helping each one become the best person she can be, especially in a world of uncertainty and rapid change. “These are fearful times,” says Sage Block. “But I think that the fear is inspiring people to create change.” Or, as Emma Lee puts it so poetically, “I am a girl who has more than 10 different dreams.” ♦

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