

Brooke Stanley

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Leadership II

What CELA Means to Me

Hello, my name is Brooke Stanley and I am a proud eighth grade graduate of the Christian Education Leadership Academy! CELA has changed me fully and I have found myself achieving goals that I never thought possible four years ago. In fact, I was a completely different person four years ago as I stepped through the threshold of CELA for the first time. Today I would like to tell you what each of the four letters of CELA mean to me as I graduate and embark on my next chapter of high school.

Let us start with the last letter <<A>> for Academy. Before I came to CELA, I went to a public elementary school. When my family was considering moving here, I pictured an academy as this spic and span, prim and proper place. I pictured parents sending their children to achieve insanely hard goals, get into an Ivy League college, and strike it rich someday. I also imagined it to be a place filled with ungrateful children who had to get one hundred percent on every assignment and compete for the best in class, grade, and school. With this idea of an academy I had created, I told myself that I had no reason to go to CELA. The moment I stepped into CELA though, my view of an academy changed forever, and I realized that I needed to be at CELA. I learned that an academy like CELA is a place where blessed students are driven to learn, excel, and achieve. At CELA, "Academy" means having high expectations but also teachers who truly care about you. The teachers help you do your

best to achieve the goals you set for yourself. With CELA, I see a strong desire to learn because the students and teachers fill the air with an inspiring attitude to value learning. With this last letter <<A>>, Academy, CELA redefined for me what an academy truly is.

Following the letter <<A>> in reverse order is the letter <<L>> for leadership. Before I came to CELA, I considered myself a leader with a strong desire to be in charge, take the lead, dictate every single component of a situation, and constantly have a say in everything. In fact, I went so far with this idea of leadership to tell myself that I absolutely did not need CELA because I was already a strong enough leader and had no need to develop any more leadership skills. However, during my first year at CELA, my view of what true leadership is changed forever and I realized that my so-called definition of leadership was wrong. I realized that leadership should change, grow, and blossom into a style more like Christ and less like the world. With leadership classes and the ability to show leadership on a completely new level, I changed. I learned that true leadership should take after Christ's leadership. Jesus led in a way that reached out to others in a selfless way. I learned that a good leader is someone with the ability to take charge, but also step down, be humble, give the glory to God, let the little things go, and recognize that everyone has different gifts to offer. I am still working on developing my leadership to be more like Christ and this is something that I will always be working on, as I am only human. Aside from my changed definition of leadership, CELA opened many doors. Within the realm of leadership in CELA, I was given the ability to be play the lead of Charlie Bucket in Willy Wonka Jr., have a chapel buddy to mentor, run technology in younger grades' chapels, play morning music, help others memorize monologues for forensics, and the list goes on and on. Four years ago, I

would never have envisioned myself doing any of those things and without CELA, I most likely would not have had the ability to lead within those things. With CELA, my leadership blossomed and changed due to the standard of true Christ-like leadership CELA set for me.

The second letter <<E>> is for education. Before I came to CELA, I considered myself already “smart” and educated enough to succeed later in life. At my old school, I was already in “smart” math, “smart” reading, and “accelerated” science, but they did not push me that much. I was able to get the A, but that was all that I cared about even if meant minimal effort on my part. I also did not have many classes that would help succeed on another level later in life. However, as I started learning at CELA, my view of school and education changed. At CELA, teachers constantly pushed me to challenge myself and not just reach for the A. My experience was completely different from my past school. It was not that my past school did not care that I was not very challenged; it just did not have the ability to challenge me with class sizes of 30. At CELA, with my class size ranging from three to sixteen people, I became more challenged and got to expand my mind to levels of education I thought would have never been possible four years ago. With this new-found education at CELA, I was also able to take harder elective classes such as ACT prep, Spanish 1 Advanced, and Civics. The education at CELA changed me and has challenged me. I am incredibly grateful for all the great teachers who have supported me and helped me exhibit such a great growth within this letter of CELA, <<E>>, education.

The first letter <<C>> is for Christian, the letter that I have changed the most within. Before I came to CELA, I had already accepted Jesus and considered myself a “good” Christian. I already went to church every Sunday, read my Bible, prayed every day, and acted

as a “good” Christian would. I had an excellent church filled with excellent teachers, mentors, and friends. I also had amazing parents who loved me with all their hearts and supported me in everything I did. However, after coming to CELA and going to the Loft, my church’s middle school and high school youth group, my Christian faith started to blossom and take off at a tremendous rate. I found myself changing from being a good Christian only when I had to be to a Christian who stood up for what I believed, even when everyone else disagreed. I found myself making more and more choices involuntarily based on what Jesus would do. I found myself in a school setting where people had the same underlying beliefs as me. My relationship with Jesus became more serious as I started to pray to God not only when I needed him, but in every situation that I encountered. I started to turn to God’s word more often and I started to find this joy and peace in Him. I found myself leaving groups of people who I realized were not a good influence on me. I found myself turning away from those chasing earthly desires and distracting me to do the same. In this process, I also learned the most important lesson that I will never be the perfect Christian, but every day I will keep being more like Christ if I aspire to be more like Him. I also learned that either I am moving to be more like Christ or more like the world and that, I could never take a neutral stance. I am so thankful for this Christian environment that CELA was able to place around me for it helped me to open my eyes and see what I needed to change in my life. If not for the <<C>> in CELA, I would not be who I am today.

I want to end this speech by saying thank you! Thank you for allowing me to be at CELA today! Thank you for allowing me to share my story! Thank you for all the friendships that I have formed over the past four years! Thank you to my family! Thank you for all the

inspirational teachers here at CELA! Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Nahey for building this amazing school that I have the gift to come to each and every day! Thank you to Jessica Mazur for starting my awesome journey at CELA here on day one! Thank you to Naomi Fulton for her constant inspiration as my wonderful cross-country coach and enthusiastic math teacher! Thank you to Jennifer Ellis for being my epic chapel buddy teacher! Thank you to: Meghan Dwyer, Jennifer Garity, Krista Simmons, Sarah Recht, Ashley Sonderman, Jeanne Andreski, Evan Hays, Kelly Kliefoth, Mikalah Fallon, Katie Ausen, Randy Hake, Jeff Stark, Sue Visconti, Brigette Baudhuin, Nicole Daniels, Dr. Don Galster, Emma Mogard, Bonnie Wehnes, and Laura Jennaro for being amazing teachers who have all impacted me greatly here at CELA and have helped me be set up for success at high school! Also, thank you to Amelia Fulton, my awesome chapel buddy who has been so much fun to mentor these past two years. If I just read your name or you are my family and friends here supporting me, I would love if you could stand so we can give you a round of applause for all you have done for me over my time here at CELA. I will miss you all so much as I depart to high school. Thank you CELA for all you have done. You have changed me forever in each of your four letters. Christian. Education. Leadership. Academy. Forever Changed!