

## What CELA Means to Me

### CELA

- Christian
- Education
- Leadership
- Academy

Four words with strong meanings individually, but when you put them together in this building they mean something much more powerful. CELA has changed me in powerful ways that have led to tremendous personal growth in my faith, my academics, my leadership skills, and my confidence to follow God's plan for my life. I believe attending CELA for the past four years was part of God's perfect plan for me

My Christian faith has grown in powerful ways at CELA. My faith "seed" was planted when I was baptized and was nurtured by my family as a young child. I believe my faith took off when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Swallow School. My teacher, Mr. Brian Dall, played Christian music in class which helped me realize that Jesus was not just a thing for Sunday mornings or with my family but was a 24/7 thing, meaning God was with me anywhere, anytime and in any situation. Truly coming to know Jesus during 4<sup>th</sup> grade gave me the courage to take a tour of CELA in August 2015. Taking the tour with Mr. Nahey and experiencing his excitement for Jesus and CELA made me take a leap of faith and switch schools. Attending CELA has been an awesome blessing, and I have never regretted my decision to leave Swallow and become a CELA Lion. Weekly chapel services, chapel families, and CVLD classes have encouraged me in my faith journey. My faith has also grown through the many Christian mentors at CELA, including Mr. Hays and Mrs. Daniels who deliver inspiring messages in chapel or plan CVLD lessons with real, every day messages to teach students what it means to live out your faith all day, every day.

My education has grown in powerful ways at CELA. Academically, CELA has taught me to expect great things from myself, to persevere in all tasks and to continually grow as a learner. Powerful academics are achieved at CELA in several ways, including small class sizes and talented teachers, and most importantly, through teachers praying with you, teachers praying for you and teachers taking time out of their day to help you when you are struggling. I learned to persevere in social studies where in 6<sup>th</sup> grade Mr. Hays' essay questions caused me to struggle greatly. I stuck with them, seeking out extra help from Mr. Hays and Mrs. Kliefoth and now the essay questions challenge me, but I confidently attempt to answer them. Another valuable CELA lesson that I will take with me to high school is that when you get your grades back do not compare yourself with those around you because everyone is at different levels in their educational journey. It is far more important to challenge yourself to do your best on every assignment or task given to you.

My leadership skills have grown in powerful ways at CELA. I will greatly miss the chapel family groups when I leave CELA. My chapel family is like an actual family to me and it is within my chapel family that I have learned and practiced many of the leadership skills I now confidently use today. During chapel families, I show leadership by being a mentor to my chapel buddy and helping to lead our chapel family in discussions. I am awed by the leadership skills I see developing in the younger students

on a daily basis and I am amazed with the many leadership skills I have developed from watching Brooke, my 5K chapel buddy, become a better leader. I am so grateful to be a part of this process. CELA offers many opportunities for leadership growth and the CELA community is encouraging and supportive when students try out various leadership activities. When I first came to CELA, I tended to be a follower and less likely to volunteer to talk during chapel families, give my faith statement at my church, participate in a musical, or dance at the talent show. Thanks to CELA fostering a positive environment for me to gain confidence while practicing leadership skills I now enjoy doing all of these leadership activities.

My confidence has grown in powerful ways at CELA. Watching many of the 4K-ers walking into CELA on the first day of school looking a little overwhelmed is similar to how I felt back on the first day of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I was not very confident, and hesitant to move outside my comfort bubble for fear of what others might think of me. CELA has helped me develop a positive confidence that will allow me to faithfully follow God's plan for my life. I recently heard a story that illustrates how my confidence has grown at CELA. The story says if you boil an egg, it stays hard on the outside and becomes hard on the inside. This is similar to less confident people who never venture out and talk to people. If you boil a coffee bean, the outer shell will soften and it will disperse into the water. This is similar to confident people that go out into world, talk to others, and accomplish great things. CELA develops confident, coffee bean kind of people who will go out into the world living their Christian faith, daily demonstrating Christian values and confidently sharing the Gospel with others. I am so thankful that CELA has helped to pop my comfort bubble and that I will start high school as a confident coffee bean type of person willing to share Jesus' love with others.

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This building is much more than these four words. This building called CELA is a powerful place because it is training the leaders of tomorrow. CELA is developing leaders that have a strong, active faith, solid academic knowledge and strong Christian values so that they can confidently lead others to make our world a better place and can willingly share the news of Jesus' love with others. CELA is a family and I would like to thank each and every member of that family for my amazing time here at CELA. I believe that attending CELA was God's perfect plan for my life and I am so grateful for having this opportunity. I will greatly miss the staff, students, my fellow graduates, and the family feel of this amazing place.