

What CELA Means to Me

The dictionary definition of family is *a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not*. To me in my mind CELA is the perfect definition of family. The amazing, tight-knit family that has been created here constantly amazes me.

One of the main things that has impacted me here at CELA was the bond that my Chapel Buddy Lydia and I share. As many of you know, CELA has the unique opportunity that not many other schools offer. Each middle schooler is paired with a younger student; this pairing is called Chapel Buddies. The Chapel Buddies attend chapel and Chapel Families together. Over the past three years, I have been able to watch Lydia grow and mature into the wonderful, sweet girl she is today and will continue to be. Our bond and friendship is something I cherish deep in my heart and will for the rest of my life. Every time I get to see her smile, hold her hand or receive one of her tight hugs, my heart is filled with joy. I am truly blessed to have been chosen to be her Chapel Buddy. I truly believe that it was the Lord's plan because Lydia has helped me grow as a leader and has brought so much joy into my life. And I am ever thankful for CELA being able to facilitate the Lord's plan through Chapel Buddies.

Another unique opportunity that CELA provides is Chapel Families. A Chapel Family is a group of students 4K through 8th grade, within the families are the chapel buddy pairings. Again I have been truly blessed through this opportunity. My chapel family is literally a small family to me. Over the past three years, my chapel family has grown so close, and it is another bond that I value deep in my heart. I have created friendships across the grades that I could not have made without the opportunity. My chapel family leader, Mrs. Reiter, has been such a mentor to me and has taught me so much about Jesus' word. Through chapel families, I am very fortunate to have mentors and the opportunity to be a mentor. No matter what we are doing, from cutting jeans to make shoes, to coloring a picture of a Bible scene, I can always feel joy and Jesus' presence in the room with my chapel family. I would like to say thank you to all the members of my chapel family; thank you for being a small family, a support system, and for helping me grow over these past three years. You have no idea how much everyone of you means to me.

Both of these opportunities have helped me grow and have affected me so much. I have gained so many valuable relationships that I will hold onto for the rest of my life. I have also grown in my faith through these experiences. My heart has grown in ways I could never imagine. My mentors have taught me how to live with Jesus as the example. And from being a mentor, I have learned how to have patience and to show compassion and love to people I never thought I would. These important lessons and skills that I have obtained through my chapel buddy, and chapel family will help me and guide me later in my life. I am and will be forever grateful for CELA providing me with a family through Faith.