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What CELA Means to Me

CELA. When I hear that word, I instantly think of the amazing memories, people, and leadership opportunities that I have experienced firsthand in the past four years. Never would I ever see myself, today, wearing this graduation gown, smiling, and waiting to move on to high school. Because of CELA, I have been shaped, formed, and created as a person who walks with God in my daily life, and am a well-rounded student, with so many character traits and Christian values that define me as a person. CELA has made me into the individual that I am today. Its founding pillars, teachers, other students, and the wonderful, smiling staff has left a permanent impact on me, and will be with me for the rest of my life.

Ever since the opening day of CELA, I felt a warm, loving environment everywhere I went. Not only have my academic skills grown, but my leadership skills that I have learned in the one of a kind, Christian Values and Leadership Development class, have grown tremendously since I walked into CELA for the very first time. When I started my first year at CELA, I felt like I was a lump of unused clay, a little bit scared and nervous to start something new. But as the years progressed, I watched as CELA changed me for the better, and the lump of unused clay was molded into something greater and more meaningful.

CELA has prepared me for high school in many ways. Before I even came to CELA, I was thinking about high school. *What would my future look like? Would I be okay meeting new people? Would I succeed in my classes?* I was very worried about making the transition between elementary school to high school. But now, I have no fear entering high school. I am confident and feel God's love surrounding me. I know I have teachers, staff, and other students supporting me. Through CELA's ACT Prep elective and Civics course, I have been exposed to material that I will be taught in high school, and am not afraid to move on.

One of the most important, life-changing experiences that I had at CELA is the chapel buddy system. This system pairs up an older, middle school chapel buddy with a younger chapel buddy (particularly a student in 4K to fourth grade). Every week, the older chapel buddy takes their younger buddy, who they have established a personal relationship with, to either chapel services or chapel family classes. This gives the younger chapel buddy an example to look up to and gives the older chapel buddy a big responsibility and teaches them leadership. Personally, my life has changed because of this chapel buddy system. I have never had such an amazing experience in my entire life, to mentor someone younger and prepare them for the life that lies ahead of them. The moments and time that my chapel buddy, Jack, and I spent together the last few years will always stick with me for the rest of my life, and I am extremely sad to “retire” my position as his chapel buddy during graduation.

Finally, CELA has allowed me to achieve things that I would never think I could ever do. When I walked into CELA for the first time, never would I ever imagine myself standing in front of hundreds of people in a musical, singing, dancing, and speaking my lines. I could never envision myself speaking at multiple CELA events. I could never see myself standing up in front of fellow students and present a project. Without CELA I could have never reached these goals which have defined me over the past few years, and without CELA, I could have never been in a musical. I could have never been comfortable speaking in front of hundreds of people. I could have never been able to present in front of my classmates. But *with* CELA, I have been able to succeed and complete these goals. I have been able to be the best version of myself that I could ever be. And I have been able to reach my full potential and show others the amazing reputation of CELA.

I will be sad and emotional when I walk out of CELA’s doors for the very last time. Everything about CELA has been so meaningful and important to me and my life. So, I thank everyone who has been an active part of CELA, and who has helped me to learn, lead, and excel throughout my journey here.