

To me, CELA is more than a school; it's family, it's a place full of leaders, and it's about developing self-confidence to talk to others, dream big, and know that you can achieve those dreams.

I came to CELA in 5<sup>th</sup> grade as a shy girl who barely talked to people I didn't know. As I met Mrs. Mazur for the first time, I really didn't know what to expect. I was super scared, and I didn't know how to have confidence talking in front of other people. Mrs. Mazur tells me that I was so red when I walked into 5<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time. I had friends at my old school, so I wasn't used to being the new kid, and not knowing any kids in my class. Elise Hohenwalter and Emma Fingleton broke the ice for me and were the first people to talk to me and include me in their activities. I still remember doing the floss with Elise while waiting to get walked to electives, and the Duck Life and Wheely we used to play on ABCYA in our free time.

I found another great friend in Clarice Hohensee. We played CELA basketball together and had so much fun bonding over shared interests and a love of sports. CELA extracurriculars, in general, were another source of self-confidence development. I was active in musicals from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and have so many wonderful memories and stories about fun with friends behind the scenes. Chapel families are another great way to grow as a leader and gain confidence. Mrs. Mazur's chapel family helped me engage in conversation with both older and younger students. On Fridays, I always looked forward to picking up my chapel buddy and going to Mrs. Mazur's room to watch videos or play games. It was definitely a highlight of my week.

When I first came to CELA, I dreamed of the day when I would get to walk down the aisle in a blue gown and graduation cap. There was something that seemed magical to me as I

sat in the chapel watching other classes graduate, the feeling that I'm going to get there someday. I'm going to sit up on that stage with my friends who I've gotten to bond with the past years, and my biggest hope was to speak in front of people saying what CELA meant to me. That's how it all started, and this is how it's going.

Lastly, I would like to say a special thank you to my teachers...Mrs. Mazur, thank you for helping me to crawl out of my shell and become the person I am today, Mr. Pepler, thank you for all the hard work you do to help us 8<sup>th</sup> graders learn the important grammatical skills we will use far after we graduate, Mrs. Recht, thank you for being an awesome math teacher and giving your time to help me understand math concepts, Ms. Stevanovic, science has never been so fun, thank you for all the labs, the laughs, and the conversations we've had, Mrs. Andreski, thank you for being my math teacher this year, and making sure that we always know that when you highlight two equations and ask us what we know about them, we know to say they are equivalent, and Mr. Hays, thank you for the interesting crash courses, the Read like a Historians, the Stratologicas, and the hard tests and quizzes that prepare me for success in high school.

As it will be sad to walk out of this building as a CELA student for the very last time, I am ready to take on the challenges that face me in high school, and embrace God's plans for me in the future. CELA has helped me find my true self, build my self-confidence, develop my leadership skills, and strive to be the best person I can be. These years at CELA have helped to me to recognize that God has blessed my life in so many ways, and he will continue to bless my life in high school and beyond. Thank you