

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY EXISTS TO ASSIST PARENTS IN THEIR MISSION TO DEVELOP EXEMPLARY CITIZENS EQUIPPED WITH ANALYTICAL THINKING SKILLS, VIRTUOUS CHARACTER, AND A PASSION FOR LEARNING, ALL BUILT UPON A SOLID FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

PALMARIUM

School Fundraiser Children's Hospital

For the 2018-19 school year, TCA-wide, we started a new consolidated fundraising effort. Last year, students at all of our schools indentified a list of varied organization that each school would raise funds for during the upcoming school years. The new **Children's Hospital** on the north side of town was the designated recipient this year. In total, TCA schools donated right at **\$75,000** to this worthwhile cause. What an outstanding effort by all involved - and a big thank you to North Elementary which led the way with the largest school contribution this year at over \$22,000. For the upcoming 2019-2020 school year our efforts will go towards helping the **Wounded Warrior** organization.

2018-2019 Finalists Titan of the Year

Stefani Hille (8th grade Language Arts, Cottage School Program)

Jessica Adair (1st grade, Central Elementary)

Annaliese Higgins (5th grade, East Elementary)

Erin Yeadon (1st grade, North Elementary)

Teresa Greene (8th grade English, Junior High)

Maura Huddleston (Biology, College Pathways)

Jennifer Smith (Chemistry and Physics, High School)

Justin Peterson (Administration - Principal, College Pathways)



Titan of the year recipient to be announced in August 2019



VIRTUOUS CHARACTER

For the last issue of 2018-19, Dorothy Simpson, Dean of Elementary Educational Philosophy, shares with us about *Growing in Virtuous Character*. Michelle Drake's speech from the Senior Breakfast - *A Strange, Wonderful, Indefinable Education* - concludes this volume. Additionally, we will touch on some TCA state and national level awards. Due to the magnitude of awards in previous year-end volumes and the other forums through which such awards are announced, this year we have decided to only include those accolades that reach first place at the state level or national level recognition. Thank you for your understanding as we make this adjustment for future year-end volumes.

The Editor



Dr. Mayfield

SOCIAL MEDIA PARENT ACADEMY

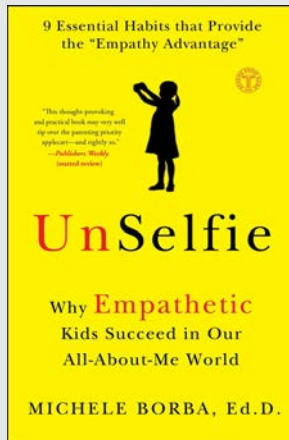
In March, Dr. Mayfield shared with the TCA community about **Seen and Secure: The Importance of Active Parenting**. Nearly 375 parents attended the event. To kick off the 2019-2020 school year we have scheduled Dr. Mayfield to return and speak with us about **Social Media** and the impact it is having in all of our lives, and in particular, the challenges it creates for students. Make sure to mark your calendars for **Tuesday evening, August 27, 2019**. We are planning for the event to meet from 6:00-8:00 pm in the Brown Center for the Arts at the North Campus. We will share more details and an online sign-up list as we begin next school year.

SAVE THE DATE AUGUST 27, 2019



The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey by Candice Millard (Apr 28-30, 2020) ["The River of Doubt – it is a black, uncharted tributary of the Amazon that snakes through one of the most treacherous jungles in the world. After his humiliating election defeat in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt set his sights on the most punishing physical challenge he could find, the first descent of an unmapped, rapids-choked tributary of the Amazon. Together with his son Kermit and Brazil's most famous explorer Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon, Roosevelt faced an unbelievable series of hardships; they lost their canoes and supplies to punishing whitewater rapids, and endured starvation, Indian attack, disease, drowning, and a murder within their own ranks. In the end, three men would die, and Roosevelt would be brought to the brink of suicide, but the expedition accomplished a seemingly impossible feat, and changed the map of the Western Hemisphere forever." One of the Best Books of the Year: *The Washington Post Book World* – *San Francisco Chronicle* – *The Christian Science Monitor* – *USA Today* – *Kansas City Star*.]

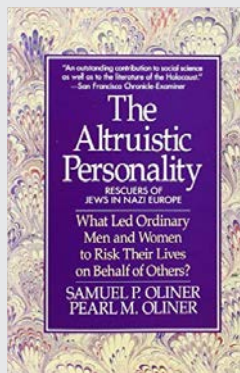
IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



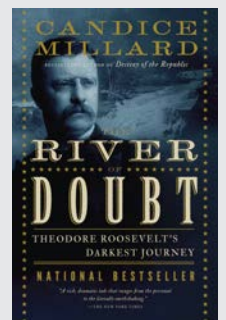
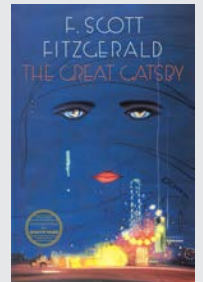
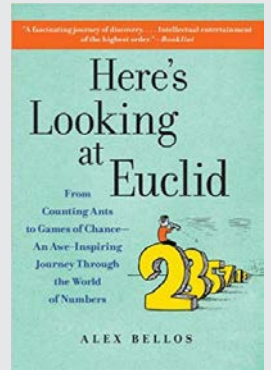
UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World by Michelle Borba (Sep 17-19, 2019) ["Teens today are 40 percent less empathetic than they were thirty years ago, often with devastating consequences. In *UnSelfie*, bestselling author and parenting expert Dr. Michelle Borba pinpoints the forces causing the empathy crisis and offers a revolutionary nine-step plan to help parents and educators cultivate empathy in children from birth to young adulthood."]

Here's Looking at Euclid: From Counting Ants to Games of Chance – An Awe-Inspiring Journey Through the World of Numbers by Alex Bellos (Nov 19-21, 2019) ["In *Here's Looking at Euclid*, intrepid traveler and masterful storyteller Alex Bellos takes readers all over the globe, and from ancient times to the cutting edge of today, to introduce a host of fascinating mathematical discoveries and the intriguing people who have made them. . . . Whether introducing astonishing feats, such as those of the 'lightning calculators' at the Mental Calculation World Cup; appealing mysteries, such as the link between pineapples and beautiful teeth; or mind-boggling puzzles, such as why your iPod can never truly select songs randomly, Bellos is a wonderfully engaging guide. *Here's Looking at Euclid* is a rare gem that conveys the awe-inspiring power and beauty of math as most of us have never seen it."]

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (Feb 18-20, 2020) [Building upon the presentation of Jeffrey Brenzel at the 2015 October In-Service we have selected a classic title that our juniors read each year. Fitzgerald in his work explores the Roaring Twenties addressing themes of power, greed, idealism, and the American Dream.]



The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe by Samuel & Pearl Oliner (Feb 18-20, 2020) [What led ordinary men and women to risk their lives on behalf of others? "What a book, what a revelation! Its message is that human decency, kindness and altruism not only exist, but that researchers of Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe, who risked their lives to help condemned strangers, were not heroes, angels, or saints but ordinary human beings. . . . A credible scientific portrait. If it were only that, it would be a historic contribution to knowledge. But it is also an engrossing anthology of stories, incidents, and episodes of altruism, told in the words of the altruists themselves, that will bring tears to the eyes of most readers – giving them courage to believe in human decency after all" – Morton Hunt, author of *Social Research: The Scientific Study of Human Interaction*.]



As we enter our fifth year of our **Engaging Minds** focus, I wanted to let you know about the **Beyond the Book Club** selections for the 2019-2020 school year. I believe it is important that we as teaching professionals continue to wrestle with relevant topics pertaining to our endeavors as a school and as individuals. I see this effort as a way to build community amongst our staff and with those in the parent community that are interested in participating. Participation, by the way, is *completely voluntary*.

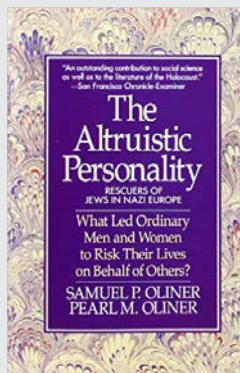
For the 2019-2020 school year, the following books will be discussed (*prospective book study dates are listed below*):

UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World by Michelle

Borba (Sep 17-19, 2019) ["Teens today are 40 percent less empathetic than they were thirty years ago, often with devastating consequences. In *UnSelfie*, bestselling author and parenting expert Dr. Michelle Borba pinpoints the forces causing the empathy crisis and offers a revolutionary nine-step plan to help parents and educators cultivate empathy in children from birth to young adulthood."]

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Growing in Virtuous Character: The Golden Mean

by Dorothy Simpson, Dean of Elementary Educational Philosophy [note: Dorothy is retiring this month after 21 years at TCA]

We speak often of virtue at TCA. Bring someone to mind that you think of as a virtuous person and try to discern what it is that makes you think so. Daily life at TCA shows us countless moments of virtue in formation, if we have our eyes opened to take it in: teachers engaging with students, children bent over beautiful artwork or great literature, colleagues encouraging each other, parents serving . . .

In the very heart of our TCA Core Values, we make the statement that “nurturing a Spirit that is *growing in virtuous character*” is of primary importance to us. Indeed, the entire document is our best thinking on how to help our community grow in virtue. This is a very inspirational, noble purpose but can be the forest we often lose because of the daily detail in the trees. There is this higher thought behind the curriculum and instruction.

Conversation about virtue immediately begs two questions. Brilliant theologians, philosophers and poets have worked to answer these for centuries, Aristotle and Augustine to name two of the heavy lifters, so the best I can do is pull some thoughts together from them to help frame discussion in light of what we so deeply desire to accomplish in our work here at TCA.

What is a virtuous person?

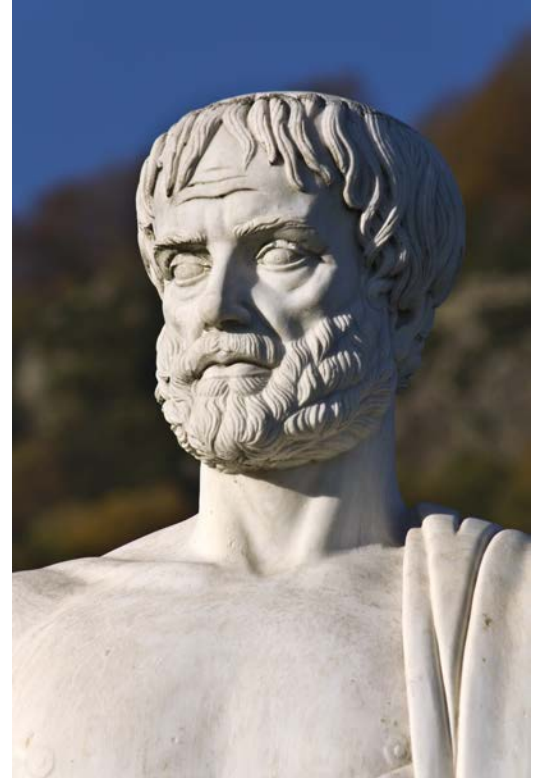
Most simply put it is a person of moral excellence, one who strives to do the right thing in the right way. They are not following a virtue rulebook but have positive, vigorous character traits that can be lived out of, wisely, in any situation.



Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* describes a virtuous person as one who most excellently lives out their nature as a human. A sharp knife would be a virtuous knife because that is how it best lives its very nature and purpose. As humans, our virtue lies in remaining within the “Golden Mean”, that place of excellence that does not tip to vice. He held **Wisdom, Prudence, Justice, and Courage** as primary virtues to be pursued and would find the golden mean for justice in that place between leniency and vengeance. That place that Javier so tragically failed to find in his driven search for Jean Valjean in *Les Miserables*.

Augustine likewise, sees virtue as a right ordering of loves. “. . . to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.27-28)

Our children know Templeton in *Charlotte’s Web* for only a moment before they understand his love for food is completely disordered. He sells out his neighbor to fill his belly without a second thought.



Growing in Virtuous Character: The Golden Mean

(continued from page 3) One of the many beauties of a classical education is that there has been shared thought over 3000 years about the meaning of virtue and what we hope to form in our future generations. The *Virtues in Action* we work with give us great help in articulating the picture of a good person to our students.

How do we become a virtuous person?

"We become what we behold," says William Blake and Aristotle would agree. If we truly desire to grow in virtue, our best hope is to surround ourselves, make ourselves students of, people who are living a virtuous life. We must use our reason and our will to choose a course, as well as companionship that is closest to the Good. He also warns that we can choose wickedness enough that the way back to virtue becomes impossible. This short video is a great summary of Aristotle's thoughts on this matter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrvtOWEXDIQ>

Augustine would agree for the most part with Aristotle but would argue that our will is not strong enough to choose. We need supernatural help to make the choices that form the habits of virtue. Those habits, once formed, begin to make us into a virtuous person.

Colleen Leonard, director of the *Sola Gratia Classical Academy*, has a beautiful thought here. "Education in virtue is a kind of formation, a retraining of our dispositions. Learning virtue – becoming virtuous – is more like practicing scales on the piano than learning music theory: the goal is, in a sense, for your fingers to learn the scales so they can play 'naturally'. Learning isn't just information acquisition; it's more like inscribing something into the very fiber of your being. . . .We learn to love not by acquiring information about what we should love, but rather through practices that form the habits of how we love."

Growing as adults and helping students build their appetite for virtue is what keeps so many of us grounded in TCA. This is not particularly tangible. There are not a series of data points we can assess and know we have reached the goal, but I am a different, better person for having spent the past 21 years in this community and have seen countless students and families changed as we go about our work. I didn't quite realize the gravity of it at the time but by choosing to work at TCA I surrounded myself with people committed to growing in virtue and am eternally grateful for that influence in my own life.

I will conclude with the first stanza of Phillis Wheatley's poem "On Virtue". She was brought from Africa as a slave at age 7 and after several years on Caribbean and southern plantations was bought by a Boston couple who helped her receive an education. This beautifully expresses the desire to be better than we are, to become a person of virtue.

On Virtue

By Phillis Wheatley

O thou bright jewel in my aim I strive
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.
I cease to wonder, and no more attempt
Thine height t'explore, or fathom thy profound.
But, O my soul, sink not into despair,
Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand
Would now embrace thee, hovers o'er thine head.
Fain would the heaven-born soul with her converse,
Then seek, then court her for her promised bliss.



<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45466/on-virtue> for complete poem

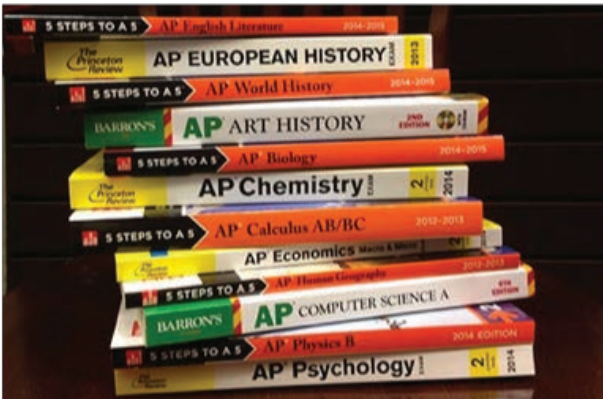
National Student Academic Awards: National Merit & AP

The AP Program offers several AP Scholar Awards to recognize high school students who have **demonstrated college-level achievement through AP courses and exams**. Although there is no monetary award, in addition to receiving an award certificate, this achievement is acknowledged on any score report that is sent to colleges the following fall.

AP Scholar: Granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams.

AP Scholar with Honor: Granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

AP Scholar with Distinction: Granted to students who receive an average score of 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams.



AP Scholar Recipients at TCA HS: Sarah Brubaker, Kyle Cameron, Claire Cerniglia, Jonathan Clemmons, Ryker Lutjens, Ashley Pedersen, Maija Pieper, Johnathan Pollard, Meredith Rees, Amanda Susman, Elizabeth White, Braden Whitmarsh

AP Scholar with Honor Recipients at TCA HS: Ryan Beckman, Nathaniel Bone, Nathaniel Johns, Aidan Johnston, Brendan Johnston, Tahlia Lowman, Brielle Patlin, Dylan Prentiss, Aleck Snider

AP Scholar with Distinction Recipients at TCA HS: Caroline Jennings, Josiah Smith

AP Scholars



The **National Merit® Scholarship Program** is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955. High school students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®)—a test which serves as an initial screen of approximately 1.5 million entrants each year—and by meeting published program entry/participation requirements. In February, some 15,000 Semifinalists are notified by mail at their home addresses that they have advanced to Finalist standing. High school principals are notified and provided with a certificate to present to each Finalist.

National Merit Commended Students: [HS] Ryan Beckman, Jonathan Clemmons, Cole Howard, Caroline Jennings, Aidan Johnston, Brendan Johnston, Josiah Smith

Finalist: [HS] Nathaniel Bone, Nathaniel Johns, [CP] Emily Shireman

National Hispanic Recognition Program: [HS] Rachel Nieves



TCA Graduates: High School and College Pathways University/College Attendance and Scholarship Totals for 2019

TCA graduates have been accepted and plan to attend the following institutions next year: Abilene Christian University, Arizona State University, Augustana College, Azusa Pacific University, Baylor University, Belmont University, Biola University, Bob Jones University, Brigham Young University, Cedarville University, Charis Christian Bible College, Colorado Christian University, Colorado Mesa University, Colorado School of Mines, Colorado State University, Emory University, Fort Lewis University, Geneva College, Grand Canyon University, Grove City College, Harding University, Hillsong College [Australia], Jacksonville University, John Brown University, Lee University, Lindenwood University, Martin Luther College, Midway University, Monmouth College, Montana State University, Northwest Kansas Technical College, Northwestern University, Oklahoma University, Oklahoma State University, Oral Roberts University, Pikes Peak Community College, Purdue University, Rollins College, Rutgers University, Savannah College of Art and Design, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Southwest Baptist University, Taylor University, Texas A&M University, The King's College, The Master's University, The Salon Professional Academy, Toni and Guy Academy, Trevecca Nazarene University, Union University, United States Air Force Academy, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Colorado Colorado Springs, University of Nebraska, University of New Mexico, University of Northern Colorado, University of Oregon, University of Puget Sound, University of South Florida Tampa, University of Wyoming, Utah State University, Vancouver Island University, Vanguard University of Southern California

For TCA's High School and College Pathways graduating **Classes of 2019 over **\$8.03 million** of scholarships have been offered to our students.**

--- TCA Honors --- State Champions --- National Awards ---

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY Overall Honors

Top Graduates:

Valedictorian - **Caroline Jennings**
Salutatorian - **Nathan Johns**

Fine Arts Students of the Year:

Tahlia Lowman and **Josiah Smith**

Athletes of the Year:

Ethan Boyles and **Kaylee Thompson**

Titan Exemplars:

Senior students that embody the mind, body, and spirit characteristics of exemplary citizens (in alphabetical order)

Nathaniel Bone
Ethan Boyles
Layna Bradford
Jonathan Clemmons
Julia Enger
Nathaniel Johns
Anna Kemper
Bethany Wormack



Latin Honors

(in alphabetical order)

Summa Cum Laude - With Highest Praise

Ryan Beckman, Nathaniel Bone, Sarah Brubaker, Catherine Casson, Jonathan Clemmons, Caroline Jennings, Nathaniel Johns, Aidan Johnston, Brendan Johnston, Anna Kemper, Ryker Lutjens, Brielle Patlin, Maija Pieper, Josiah Smith, Aleck Snider, Amanda Susman, Bethany Wormack

Magna Cum Laude - With Great Praise

Stephanie Adams, Christine Balke, Julia Enger, Kathryn Flaherty, Abbie Harrigan, Cole Howard, Kyrie Milliron, Ashley Pedersen, Maria Plett, Meredith Rees, Nishayla Roitsch, Madison Romine, Elizabeth White, Braden Whitmarsh, Megan Wong

Cum Laude - With Praise

Bailey Ball, Emma Ballard, Ethan Boyles, Layna Bradford, Claire Cerniglia, Matthew Leland, Shaina Macy, Dylan Prentiss, Alexa Rogers, David Shearon, Mikayla Taylor, Andrew Versaw, Whitney Waite, Kaitlin Walters, Namoe Webb, Jessica Wielgus

STATE CHAMPIONS 2019 CHSAA + Other State Awards

(in alphabetical order)

Teams:

Band - Marching (2A State Champions)
Corda/Jubilate (4A Academic State Champions)
Cross Country - Women (3A State Champions)
Golf - Men (3A Academic State Champions)
Soccer - Women (4A Academic State Champions)
Spirit/Cheer (4A Academic State Champions)
Wind Ensemble (2A Academic State Champions)

Individuals:

Nathan Johns (Wrestling State Champion - 182)
Mason Norman (Cross Country State Champion)
Mason Norman (CHSAA Runner of the Year)
Mason Norman (Gazette Peak Performer of Year)
Meredith Rees (50m Freestyle, 100m Backstroke)
Kaylee Thompson (Cross Country State Champ)
Kaylee Thompson (1600m, 3200m State Champ)
Kaylee Thompson (CHSAA Runner of the Year)
Kaylee Thompson (Gazette Peak Performer of Yr)
Cayla Wilburn (Top Ranked 3A High Jumper)
Kristina Willis (Pole Vault State Champ)

Gary Geiger (4A Athletic Director of the Year)
Alan Versaw (3A Coach of the Year - Cross Country)

PLEASE NOTE: Every effort was made to include each student/team that received state champion level or national accolades this past year at TCA. Any omissions were inadvertent. I apologize in advance for any oversights and misspellings contained herein - *the Editor*.

Kretchman Cup:

The fourth annual award for top senior Rhetoric presentation was awarded at graduation this year. Four individuals presented before a judging panel made up of the TCA President, Director of Academic Services, High School Principal, and Dean of Secondary Educational Philosophy. The Kretchman Cup winner is listed first, followed by the others competing in alphabetical order.

Anna Kemper - 1st place
Caroline Jennings
Maija Pieper
Josiah Smith



--- TCA Honors --- State Champions --- National Awards ---

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY
Other Honors

Visual Art Awards:

Scholastic Art Awards National Medalist

top 2% of student art in the United States

Abigail Clapp (10th HS)
Sibongeleni (We Are Grateful)



Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Colorado - 1st Place Gold Key Award

Mikayla Taylor (12th HS) - Drawing *The Promise*
Kaitlin Walters (12th HS) - Drawing *Risen*
Abigail Clapp (10th HS) - Drawing *Sibongeleni*
Bethany Harris (10th HS) - Drawing *Fire and Ice*



Colorado Science and Engineering Fair

(continued)

Hailey Kressin (8th JH)

Medicine and Health

"A Sixth Sense: Omni-Directional Presence Detection System"

Tori Plett (7th JH)

Microbiology and Molecular Biology

"Germs on a Roll"

National Latin Exam Awards

Students receiving Summa Cum Laude (Gold Medal) and Maxima Cum Laude (Silver Medal) accolades on the national test are listed below.

LATIN I

Hanah Prudhomme (Maxima),
Gabriel Wu (Maxima)

LATIN II

Sarah Smith (Summa),
Eric Bauman (Summa)
Ethan Voth (Summa),
Quinn Cunningham (Maxima),
Allison Greening (Maxima)
Grace Tesar (Maxima)



LATIN III

Ekaterina Jaramillo (Summa),
Kaleb Shumway (Summa),
Brendan Gould (Maxima),
Jonathan Haerr (Maxima)

LATIN IV

Nathaniel Bone (Maxima),
Timothy Schmidt (Maxima)



Colorado Science and Engineering Fair

TCA had 26 students compete at the State Science Fair and won numerous awards including four 1st place honors in the twelve competitive categories.

Samantha Cerniglia (7th JH)

Earth and Space Sciences

"Shields Up: Wilson Cloud Chamber Study of High Energy Subatomic Particle Shield Materials"

Michael Wu (7th JH)

Energy

"LED Lights: Hero or Zero"

--- TCA Honors --- State Champions --- National Awards ---

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY Other Honors (continued)

Student Non-CHSAA State and National Honors:

Kalvin Blauer (12th CP)
USA Boccia Paralympics

Macy Bennett (11th HS)
*Colorado Student Media Association
1st place - Academic Writing (Yearbook)*

Matthew Sherman (10th CP)
*USA Junior Bouldering
qualified for Nationals; 2nd in State*

Michael Pepe (8th CP)
*USA Gymnastics JD2 Colorado -1st Place Team
State Champion - JD2 Parallel Bars*

Katharine Roach (8th CSP)
*Knights of Columbus State Free Throw Champion
for 14 year olds; 8th Grade Club Basketball Team
won State Championship*

Josie Bakk (6th CSP)
*US Gymnastics Level 7 All Around State Champion
and 1st Place on Floor; Regional Qualifier*

Grady Ortiz (2nd Central Elementary)
*National Drive, Chip and Putt @ Augusta National
tied for 5th in Boys Age 7-9 Group*



TCA OVERALL RECOGNITION:

JOHN IRWIN SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

This award is given by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for schools in the top 8% of Colorado public schools that demonstrate excellent academic achievement [fourteen District 20 schools received this recognition in 2018].

TCA High School and TCA College Pathways

2019 U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT RANKINGS

U.S. News and World Report analyzed over 23,000 high schools in the United States.

TCA High School ranked **#19 in the state of Colorado**, #171 amongst charter schools in the United States, and the **#936 high school nationally**. This ranking places TCA in the **top 4% of high schools** in the nation.

2018 SchoolDigger.com Rankings (used since ColoradoSchoolGrades.com, previously used, no longer ranks)

TCA Elementary ranked **#82 of 917** elementary schools in the state of Colorado.

TCA Junior High School ranked **#74 of 418** junior high/middle schools in the state of Colorado.

TCA High School ranked **#16 of 388** high schools in the state of Colorado.

TCA College Pathways ranked **#12 of 388** high schools in the state of Colorado.

Giving Back: TCA Community Service Day Plus

Each year our Titan Teams at High School go out into the community for a service day. Forty teams (over 600 students) worked on thirty-four different projects this year. Work activities took place at each of the following locations: New Day Cottages, Habitat Restore, El Paso County Parks [Fountain Creek, Fox Run, and Bear Creek], Coalition of the Upper South Platte, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, Western Museum of Mining, YMCA [Wilson Ranch Pool and Monument Valley Pool], La Foret, Goodwill Industries [Monument Store and Voyages Program], Operation Homefront, Liberty Heights, Special Kids Special Families [Adult Services Program and Zach's Place], High Plains Helping Hands, Glen Eyrie, TCA North Elementary Sparkle Day, TCA Junior High Carnival, TCA Facilities [North, Central, and East], WildBlue Animal Rescue, Flying W Ranch, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Mill Dog Rescue, Arc Thrift Stores, Dale House Project, Downtown Homeless, Children's Hope Chest.



Some examples of  students helping others.

Boo for Food: TCA received 2nd place out of all D20 schools with 904 non-perishable items donated to **Springs Rescue Mission**.

Wreaths Across America: Raised \$4,044 for 404 wreaths to be donated to **Memorial Gardens** in **honor of veterans**.

Toy Drive: Student led donations for **Hope and Home** an organization supporting foster children.

Mr. Titan Contest: Raised \$970 in support of **Exodus Road**.

Children's Hospital: TCA-wide school fundraising effort highlighted on first page of this issue of the PALMARIUM.

A Strange, Wonderful, Indefinable Education

by Michelle Drake, 12th Grade English Teacher [note: *this speech was presented at the 2019 Senior Breakfast*]

When I tell people I work at a classical charter school, and then they ask me what that means, I always struggle for a brief response to define TCA. Do I try to explain Shirley grammar or Charlotte Mason? Do I explain that yes, we still think a “dead” language is worth learning, and 800-page novels worth reading? Do I tell them we make students sum up the purpose of human existence in fifteen minutes? Rather than trying to paraphrase the beautiful strangeness of TCA, I usually refer in generalities to small class sizes and great works of literature.

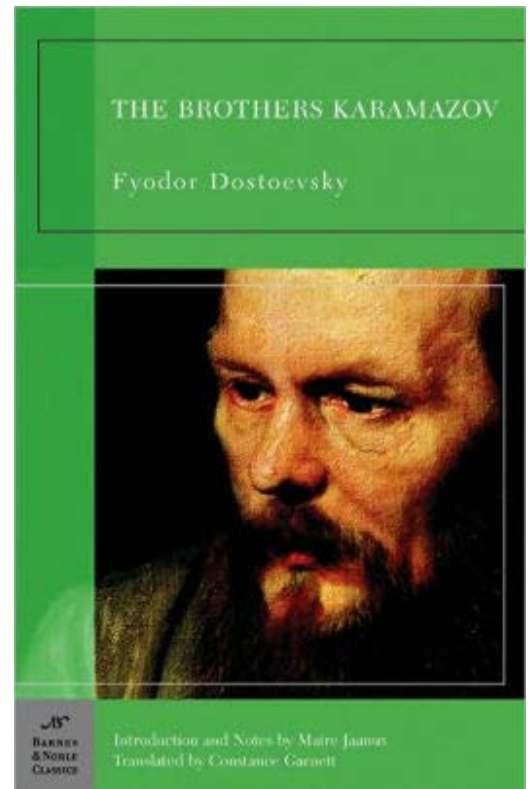
Like anything important, exactly what going through TCA means defies words a bit. You’re probably all still processing yourself what it has meant to you, here, as it comes to an end. You know somewhere in your gut that this has all been about more than uniforms and ten-page papers, but perhaps you’re still unsure as to what exactly it has done.

I’d like to start by telling you what this TCA education has not been, nor tried to be. I know I’m supposed to try and inspire you a little bit, but it’s important that I’m honest or you’ll simply think this is sophistry for a special occasion. Your education has not prepared you for real life. I know that’s a shocking thing to say, and perhaps a frustrating one. If this weren’t a public school, your parents might demand their money back at this sentiment. But it’s the truth. I know we talk a big talk about all the things we’re preparing you for - college writing, studying for high stakes exams, managing your time well . . . Or not. But the truth is that even the most useful skills you might have picked up you will find challenged. You might feel cheated that you spent all that time learning MLA, but have to write in APA, or that your professors rarely give extensions. You might not think you can possibly be more exhausted than during tech week of the musical or right before Marching Band at State, but you can be and you will be. And beyond these details, the truth is that the most important, difficult and wonderful things in life are impossible to truly prepare for, by any education or theoretical wisdom. No curriculum can prepare you for the grief of losing a friend, no quizzes can teach you how to identify and pursue the love of your life, and no studying can prepare you to identify your vocation and find contentment in your career.

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

So, has all of this hard work, all of this learning, not been worthwhile? Is it useless? By no means. Because although TCA cannot completely prepare you

for real life, we have taught you some things. We have tried to teach you quite a lot, in fact. And I don’t mean the characters in *Brothers Karamazov*, the quadratic equation, or the imperfect tense. I know we didn’t teach you how to do your taxes, or change a tire, or a cook a meal. But trust me, in the age of Google, you don’t need school for that. The education you have been given is not an instruction manual, but a set of tools for exploration. What we have tried to teach you is how to learn and perhaps more importantly, how to long. We have tried through music, and art, and the greatest novels and the most fascinating science, to teach you to yearn for something beyond points, and grades, and numbers. We have tried to teach you to create, to think for yourselves, and to consider deeply your own place in the world. I know that sometimes we have failed you in this endeavor and you’ve lost sleep over Infinite Campus updates. But ultimately, I hope that when you look back on your whole TCA experience, you see that it was not about what you have done, but about who you are.

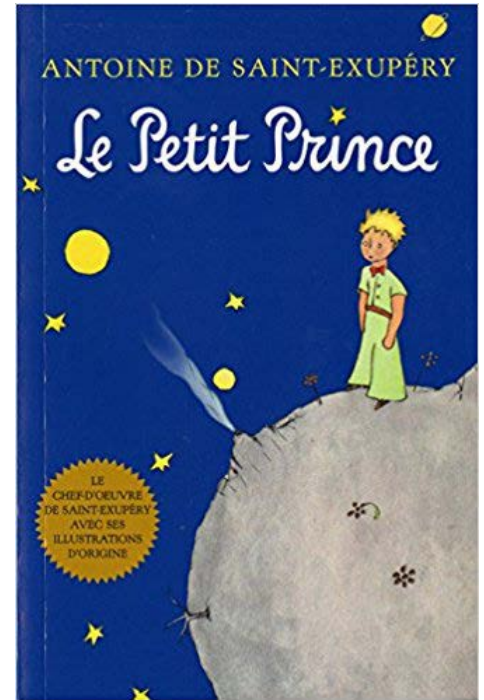


A Strange, Wonderful, Indefinable Education

(continued from page 11) I don't want to undermine your accomplishments. TCA is obviously no easy school, and the total amount of pages written, scales played and sung, lines memorized, hours poured into finals-studying and sweat, tears and certainly blood poured into your athletic accomplishments - these are no mean feat. But at the end of the day, for we that work here, it has never been about your G.P.A., your state championship or your incredible voice. These things do matter. But what matters more is who you are - if you are kind, who you love and are loved by, how you fight for the light in even your darkest moments. In a world ever increasingly demanding things to be quantified and analyzed and pinned into a spreadsheet for budget plans, TCA resists defining students by test scores or talents alone. Gradebooks and awards, however necessary, is not the purpose of education. Hopefully, the teachers taking pay cuts to have deep conversations with you, the principals who will support your pranks, and the peers you have known since kindergarten prove that what we want you to learn here at TCA is more than just a set of skills that can be put in a resume.

So what have we tried to teach you? We have tried to show you that some of the most important parts of being a human transcend how useful or successful you are. We have tried to teach you that pursuing truth, beauty and goodness, even though they might not get you a pay raise, are worthwhile. Even though we tried to make you answer unanswerable questions - in less than twenty minutes - and graded you on it, we tried to teach that the asking itself rather than your answer was more important. We taught you in the words of St. Exupery in *Le Petit Prince*, that the most essential things are invisible to the eyes, that the most important things cannot be put into a transcript. You have learned that a simple, tiny onion can be more powerful than raging against the injustices of the world. Your brilliant mind and your incredible talents matter - but not as much as your ever-continuing search to give and receive love, and to be a person of character in a world of competitive compromising.

There is a reason that we teach around tables in the Senior year at TCA as a symbol of what we hope these years can achieve. It shows that we value the invisible, indefinable work of good conversation more than control or calculated results. Have you ever tried to summarize a deep, profound, lengthy conversation that you had to another person? It rarely works. Some of you have had a thirteen year conversation - with adults and mentors who have loved you, with incredible authors who have challenged you, with experiments and exams that have exhausted you, with art that has required your very self to execute, with fellow students who have tried your patience, or broken your heart, or inspired you to be better - and of course that long conversation can't quite be summed up with the piece of paper you will receive when you walk across the stage next week. That's okay. This has been your community, love it or hate it, for years, and it has shaped you, like the innumerable conversations you have had along the way. I hope many of you are feeling accomplished, but for those of you who might be feeling a bit dissatisfied, a bit like you might not have done all that you hoped, know that it might be because this has all been much bigger than you, or what you can put into words.



A Strange, Wonderful, Indefinable Education

(continued from page 12) These are some lessons I have had to learn the hard way for myself. When I decided to miss the first part of school this year and stay behind with my sick mom, it was incredibly difficult. I knew it was the right thing to do - I wanted to be there with her, and knew it was important, but I have been so accustomed my whole life to define myself by all my doing and striving, by my perfectionism and my efforts alone. And this year put me in a position where I had to reconsider what was really important. I knew that I'd be coming back to my favorite thing in the world, teaching, emotionally depleted and far less capable than I'd ever been. I felt stressed and saddened by all the things I wouldn't be able to do. I like to consider myself intelligent and hard-working, but neither of those things can carry you through the minefield of grief. And yet when I returned, and was met with grace and love by my students, with hugs from co-workers, with kind e-mails from parents, I remembered that this job is not and has never been about teacher's or student's achievements.

And more importantly, in the months that I gave up to spend with my dying mother, I learned yet again the powerful lesson that love and community are more important even than your brightest, most cherished abilities. My witty words, my sassiness, my cleverness all come from my mom. We loved to talk, and she imparted her wisdom to so many. But after she had the stroke this summer, she could only say one word after the blood clot impacted her marvelous brain - "okay." That was it. "Okay" was all she could say, for her whole range of witticisms and retorts and willing cancer to wait a while longer. It was so clearly NOT okay, but she used "okay" to reassure us, to communicate her sarcasm and her hope, and ranges that you wouldn't think possible from a single word. Yet with that single word, she communicated more of love, of forgiveness, of good humor, of compassion, of bravery to my whole family than most people can in whole essays. Even with words stripped away, she spoke volumes. And that proved to me that our most valuable education is not the speeches we make or the awards we earn, but who we are, the essential, indefinable quality of our humanity and love. It's the wordless kiss to the Grand Inquisitor that provides the only possible answer to his questions. It's the word-escaping, wonderful strangeness of your years at The Classical Academy, combined with your individual triumphs and sorrows, which are more important than all of the words we can say here.

So, as you go out into the world beyond TCA, into different conversations and new, unknown, beauty, be assured that although you might not be ready for everything, you are ready enough. All these years you have been shaping who you are, and not just what you do, and that means, oddly enough, that you can now do just about anything. But as you go out into the world, the pressure to give in to defining yourself by numbers and accomplishments will magnify. I urge you to continue to be counter-cultural, and to value the beautiful, invisible, essential things. To quote the poet Wendell Berry, "everyday do something that won't compute." We urge you to make music. Become a teacher. Sketch in your sketchbook, even though it's not for points anymore. Go on a hike. Read a big, long, challenging book and revel in the difficulty. Have a deep discussion late into the night. Listen to an opinion you disagree with, and truly consider it. Be willing to change your mind, share your passion, and give love to those who you might not think deserve it. Admit that you're wrong. Form a new community, and sit around the table with people who challenge you, and inspire you and even frustrate you, and learn to cherish them anyway. Follow the truth, and not just success.

Don't get me wrong, I want you to go out and be successful too! Go out and achieve great things! Go to med school or law school, make some money, and then come back and support your TCA teachers in retirement, that's all great! But when those tangible things fail you, because they will at some point, I want you to know how much you still have, how much more there is to being human than recognition and stuff, how we are proud of you for so much more than your graduating next week. We hope that truth, beauty and goodness are lifelong pursuits for you; but remember, they're not just things to look for, but all around you, and within you, if you have the eyes to see it. We have seen it in you. I have seen it in you. And now we get to send you into the world to show others just exactly what a strange, wonderful, indefinable classical charter school education can do.





So, friends, every day
do something that
won't compute. . . . Love
someone who
does not deserve
it. . . . Ask the
questions that have
no answers.

Wendell Berry