

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

Stories from the Classroom

For the 2019-2020 school year we plan to share with the TCA community, in each of the volumes of the PALMARIUM, **Why I Teach: Stories from the Classroom**. These reflections, written by our teaching staff, will touch on some of the varied reasons why our staff do what they do. As we kick off 2020 please enjoy the thoughts from one of our Resource Teachers for grades K-6 and a High School Math Teacher from the traditional program.

TCA President: State of the School

On Monday, 6 January, the entire TCA staff met in the Brown Center to hear Dr. Sojourner's annual State of the School address, followed by training provided by the U.S. Marshall's office regarding proper response to an active shooter/attack.

Dr. Sojourner's presentation was titled "Where We've Been... Where We're Going" with summary highlights listed below:



From TCA's Core Values Document: "The foremost measure of our success now and in the future is how well we live up to the words of this document, and to a lesser extent by test scores, number of students enrolled, number of students on our wait list, and other outside measures of success."

But with respect to some of those other "outside measures of success," in the areas of 1) Academic Performance, 2) Culture, Character, and Educational Philosophy, 3) Operations, 4) Finance, and 5) Staff/Personnel, TCA is in excellent shape:

- TCA-D20 Board Liaison: "The Classical Academy's Academic Performance and overall educational program continues to demonstrate excellence. It is one of the top performing schools in Colorado at all levels, from [cont. on p. 4]"



As noted in last month's issue, and in the recent communications from the TCA Board and Dr. Sojourner, we are planning a **TCA Town Hall on January 22 from 6:30-8:30 pm** in the **Brown Center at the North Campus** and a **Special TCA Board Meeting on March 2 from 6:00-8:00 pm** in the **North Elementary Auxiliary Gym** to engage with the community on the topic of electronic devices and their impact on the school environment. Please take some time before those meetings to review some of the resources we have compiled on the topic at this **link on our TCA website**.

The Editor





WOUNDED WARRIOR

Last year we started a TCA-wide fundraising effort for the same organization, across all school levels, for the first time in our history [the 2018-19 school year focused on **Children's Hospital** and we raised nearly \$75,000]. The organizations selected for the six-year period from 2018-2024 were determined by students across all campuses. For the 2019-2020 school year the TCA-wide school fundraising focus will be for the **Wounded Warrior Project**. Each school has an individual donation page. If you'd like to donate to TCA's overall effort [click here](#). **We have raised over \$38,000 so far!**



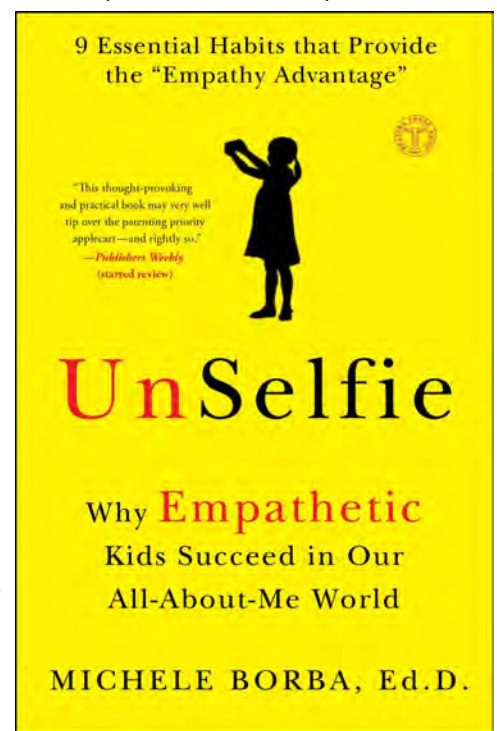
Dr. Michele Borba Speaking at TCA

On **March 12th and 13th**, Dr. Michele Borba will be speaking to the TCA parent community and TCA staff in separate presentations. On **Thursday, March 12 from 6:30-8:00 pm** in the Brown Center (North Campus) Dr. Borba will be sharing with parents on her book *UnSelfie*. There will be 100 copies of her book available, the evening of the event, for parents to purchase for \$10 each. Additionally, the next afternoon, TCA staff will hear from Dr. Borba on **Friday, March 13 from 1:00-2:30 pm**. Please mark your calendars to join us for these important events. We will also be having book studies on her work in February (see below).



ENGAGING MINDS:

The fourth book study of the school year with staff will be *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World* by Michele Borba. The book study sessions last ninety minutes each (and you only need to attend one). Two sessions for the Borba book will be scheduled for **Tuesday and Wednesday, February 18-19** beginning at 4:00 pm (in the NE Library Pikes Peak Room). We may possibly add a third date if these two sessions fill up. Parents are also welcome in our studies. If you'd like to join us for this one or receive a reminder about future book studies send an e-mail to wjolly@asd20.org and I'll add you to the RSVP list for February and include you on future book club invitations. There will be one more study this year in late April on the book *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* by Candice Millard.



I come from a **family of teachers** so a school setting is nothing new to me. My family members each picked a different grade or specialty. They taught 6th grade, 3rd and 4th grade, kindergarten, 7th and 8th grade, Spanish, French, Biology, Math, and 5th grade. **My specialty is special education.** I came to teaching because my own children have Dyslexia and struggled with reading, writing and spelling, along with one daughter who has Dyscalculia (the math form of Dyslexia). I spent many hours teaching them how to read in the evenings, on top of what they received during the day at school. **Watching my own daughter** (who could not read on a kindergarten level in second grade) take Honors English in High School **gave me inspiration to get a Master's Degree in Special Education.**

Being a resource teacher, I teach children who struggle academically. In the early elementary years, I teach letter names and sounds, math addition facts, or how to hold a pencil and write their name. In the upper elementary years, **I teach all components of reading,** multiplication and division facts, fractions, percentages, writing papers including introductory and concluding paragraphs, grammar, executive functioning skills, (and many other academic areas) in the upper elementary years. I get to see the same students several years in a row and see their growth from being able to name 3 letters in kindergarten, to reading 70 words in third grade, to writing a 5 paragraph paper in sixth grade. From a child not knowing what a number was in kindergarten to working on grade-level math in second grade. From reading one word in first grade to exiting their IEP in fourth grade because they now read at grade-level. I teach because I have a second grade student who scored zero correct words on



a first grade passage to reading 18 correct words on a second grade passage, all in one school year. I teach to **see the delight in a child's eyes** when they have worked on reading a word for 50, 100, or 200 (or more) times to recognizing that word on sight the 201st time and they are so excited.

I teach because I have small groups, I get to know my students, and I **develop a relationship with each of them.** Every Monday morning I take five minutes to hear about one thing that my students did over the weekend. While this develops a relationship with my students (which I love), this is more important to them than it is to me. If I forget, they immediately remind me that we haven't shared. If we have a Monday holiday, we share on Tuesday at their request. **They love to share about their lives** and what they do outside of school. Since academics is hard for my students, they often excel in other areas and **I love to celebrate with them** on their accomplishments.

WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom

I teach because **all students have great gifts,** my students just don't see it since academics can be hard for them. I help **encourage them to see** their strengths. We discuss that everyone has areas of weakness; they just found their area early, just as everyone has strengths. My students chart their scores so they can see their progress. They love setting new goals weekly and trying to achieve those goals. The hardest part for me is when a child on an IEP no longer needs me because they are working at grade-level and they no longer need an IEP. This is ultimately my goal for each of my students and **I celebrate with them** as they go back into the classroom full time, but I do miss them. This is a celebration as they have reached grade-level standards and benchmarks through their own **perseverance and hard work.**

I have had several jobs in my life: customer service, cafeteria worker, day care worker, babysitter, mother, computer programmer, treasurer for various organizations, sales, para in a school setting, and teacher. **Teaching (along with raising my own children)** is the one job that I never get up in the morning and say to myself, 'Do I have to go to work today?' **I love my job and I love teaching.**

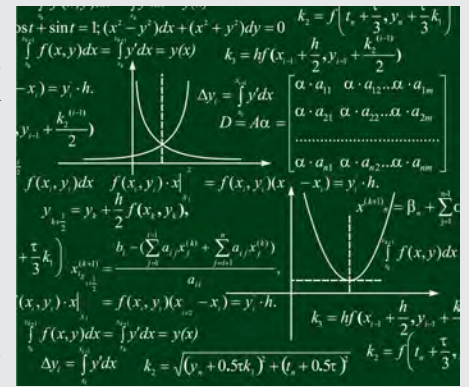
Mary Hawthorne,
Resource Teacher Elementary



Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat. - F. Scott Fitzgerald

WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom

Not only do I hope to **instill a love of math** in my students, I also hope to help them **grow in virtuous character**. Here is one success story. I had a student named Ryan who didn't do his homework on a regular basis. I wouldn't quit at trying to get him to do it. **He got an F the first semester**. I found out second semester that he had a partial absence the same period as my planning period, so I made him **sit with me each day until he finished his assignment**. He got an **A the second semester, and a 5 (the highest possible score) on the AP calculus exam**, but the story doesn't end there. A year later, he calls me. He tells me **he's a math major**. I'm touched. He then tells me he was working on a problem and had been struggling for an hour and a half, but was getting nowhere, so he was going to quit. Then he said he **remembered how I wouldn't quit on him, so he kept going, persevered**, and solved the problem. He just **called to thank me for never quitting** and teaching him to never give up. **I cried tears of joy. I had achieved both of my goals.**



John Knuth, High School Math Teacher

[continued from p. 1] the Cottage School Program to the College Pathways Program, and from kindergarten through high school.”

– Last year’s Parent Survey: “With over 1400 parents responding, the survey once again delivered extremely positive results, with every TCA common question showing higher ratings in 2019 than in 2014 when first asked.”



– Annual TCA Monitoring Report to D20: “One of our primary goals continues to be maintenance and construction of quality, safe, and environmentally friendly facilities.”

– TCA-D20 Board liaison: “TCA is not only on a strong foundation, it is a model for financial excellence and transparency – in the strongest financial position in their history.”

– Human Resources Annual Report: “2019 was another good year for our staff. Employee turnover was very low compared to TCA averages and surrounding districts, and our Climate Survey results were once again very positive, with our second highest ever participation rate.”



– Summary Evaluation Statement from the TCA-D20 Board Liaison: “The Classical Academy is a model of what is possible in terms of turning a vision for a collaborative effort between school and community into an environment that consistently demonstrates higher academic achievement, efficient school operations and sound governance, as well as solid financial practices. For over 20 years, TCA has consistently performed at the highest academic levels, rightly earning multiple commendations for their academic performance. Additionally, TCA exists on the foundation of Core Principles and Values, from which they do not waiver.”

Dr. Sojourner then foreshadowed for staff the upcoming Town Hall on Digital Health, and presented research/literature regarding the negative effects of smart phones, mobile electronic devices, and associated use of social media. To help our students and staff reduce associated distractions,

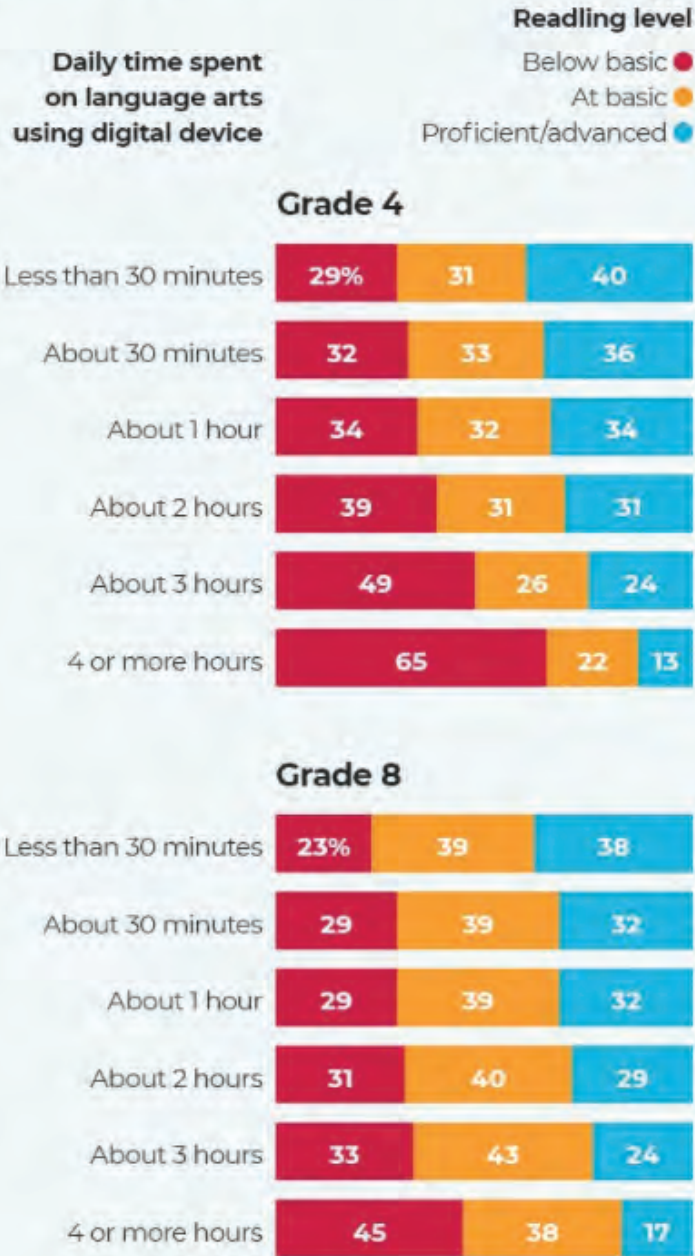


build meaningful relationships, minimize negative mental health effects, and promote positive habits, Dr. Sojourner and the Board of Directors are considering further limiting student access to electronic devices during the school day. Save these dates for associated information exchanges: **22 January** (6:30-8:30 pm) Town Hall or **2 March** (6:00-8:00 pm) Special Board Meeting!

NAEP Testing Reading Results and Digital Devices

Too Much of a Good Thing?

Most reading classrooms now include at least some time for students working on digital devices, but data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress suggest a little may go a long way. Background information collected from 4th and 8th grade teachers and students participating in NAEP show a link between spending more screen time in language arts work and lower reading proficiency on the NAEP.



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

taken from Education Week article, November 8, 2019

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress

Chart shows National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for the most recent year correlated to used of digital devices for reading. Article can be found at [by clicking here.](#)



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Dripping water
hollows out stone,
not through force
but through
persistence.