

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 eight 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 they do what they do. I hope you will enjoy reading these small glimpses of why our staff dedicate themselves to the teaching profession and interacting with your students on a daily basis.



## Academic Accolades for TCA Schools

Recently several TCA schools were recognized as **John Irwin Award** recipients for 2019. The John Irwin awards are given to schools that demonstrate exceptional academic achievement over time. These schools received an **Exceeds Expectations** rating on the Academic Achievement indicator of the School Performance Framework reflecting combined exceptional performance in Math, English, Language Arts, and Science. To receive this rating the school achievement performance indicator must exceed an 87.5% level. For this past school year **TCA High School, TCA College Pathways, and TCA Junior High** were each designated John Irwin Award recipients. TCA Elementary scored an 86.3% on the combined achievement score, just missing the award for this past year. Twelve schools within District 20 were given this recognition, and TCA is honored to have three schools amongst that acknowledged group.



### Cottage School Program, Junior High, and High School

- this month we hear from teachers from these three schools on **Why I Teach**. Take a moment and engage with their stories. We just finished our annual October Teacher In-Service. The theme was **Our Passions**. Each staff member was able to choose from an assortment of topics taught by their peers. A couple comments from staff will lead us into this issue: "I love that TCA gives teachers a chance to learn for the sake of learning . . . it rejuvenates the joy of learning in our community!" and "I went home from the conference physically, emotionally, and mentally charged up."



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 \$17,000 so far!**



**WOUNDED WARRIOR  
PROJECT**

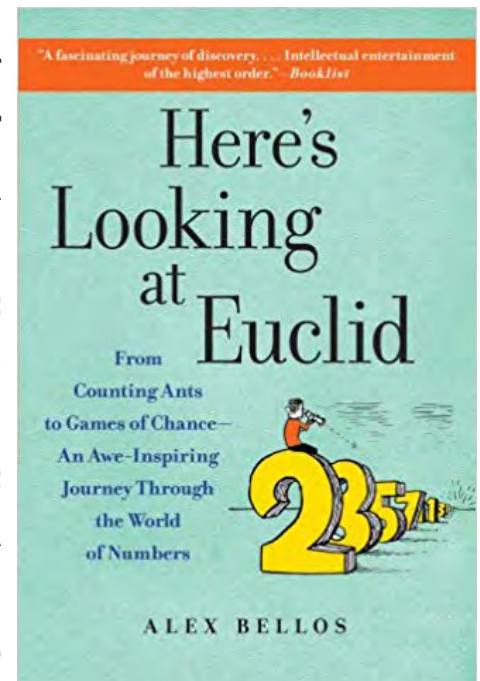
## Dr. Sojourner at Central Elementary

On October 4, Dr. Sojourner joined with the Central Elementary community for their **Wounded Warrior fundraiser**. What a beautiful day for students and their families. It was truly wonderful to see so many military service members participate in the activities that day.



## ENGAGING MINDS:

The third book study of the school year with staff will be *Here's Looking at Euclid: From Counting Ants to Games of Chance - An Awe-Inspiring Journey Through the World of Numbers* by Alex Bellos. The book study sessions last 90 minutes each (and you only need to attend one). The two sessions for the Bellos book will be **Tuesday-Wednesday, November 19-20** beginning at 4:00 pm (in the NE Library Pikes Peak Room). High School AP Physics and Robotics teacher, Dr. Darren Wilson, will be leading these sessions. 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](mailto:wjolly@asd20.org) and I'll add you to the RSVP list for November and include you on future book club invitations. I can also provide those interested with a listing of the remaining titles we plan to read for this school year.



The **roundabout way** I jumped into teaching makes me smile. When I was a sophomore at Wheaton College in Illinois, my **twelve-year-old brother changed the trajectory of my life** with a simple suggestion. I had spent my freshmen year as a typical pre-med student until I came to the realization that I was **not fond of the science classes**. I dropped the pre-med biology major and was trying to figure out what in the world I wanted to do.

During this time, my **younger brother was in 7th grade** in Texas. Due to a demanding English teacher, he struggled in writing and quickly became frustrated. Anytime he had a paper due for English, he would call me for help. Of course, this was well before the era of sending papers electronically, so he had to **painstakingly read his paper to me word by word over the phone**. I would write every word down and then help him with the structure and the punctuation. I enjoyed connecting with him and coaching him on the ways to write clearly.

One night after helping him for an hour or two, I told him how frustrated I was that I could not figure out what to do with my life. **In all his 7th grade wisdom, my brother suggested, “Janna, why don’t you teach English? You like it, and you are good at it.”** I was stunned. His suggestion immediately resonated so clearly through me. In hindsight it is obvious that I should strive do something I enjoyed, but until he suggested it, I had not contemplated doing something that so readily appealed to me. **The very next day**, I changed my major to English Literature with a certification in secondary education. When I looked over the prerequisites for a secondary education degree, I happily found out that I had already completed many of the requirements



including a year of tutoring in inner city Chicago. This confirmed my decision.

**It is no accident that I am teaching 7th grade Language Arts** —the subject and grade level that my brother struggled with when I made the decision to become a teacher. I find **joy in learning**, and I find joy in teaching, especially in teaching junior high. It is an amazing gift to be able to see my 7th grade students thrive in the classroom and have success in writing. It is a delight to illuminate the **virtues found in literature** and to be able to apply these lessons to our lives. I work to create a calm, relaxed atmosphere where students feel comfortable enough to learn and where students support and respect each other. I have a special compassion for junior high students as they try to find the right balance between leaving their elementary years behind them and transitioning to high school. I am **grateful for the opportunity** to partner with my students’ families and to make a difference.

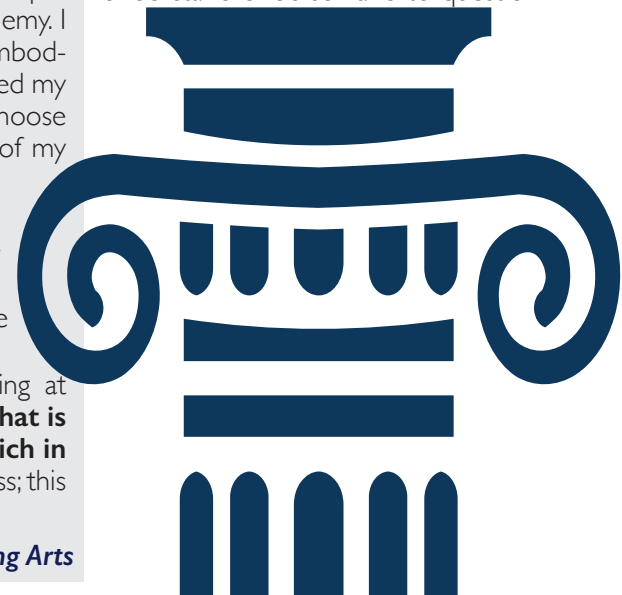
## WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom

However, the reason why I teach cannot be separated from why I teach at The Classical Academy. I enjoy working at TCA because the school embodies **the values that I believe**. TCA has blessed my own children, and I want to return the gift. I choose to be an educator at TCA because so little of my classroom time is spent correcting negative student behavior; the vast majority of my time is spent **simply enhancing learning** — something so precious and beautiful. Because my colleagues and administrators are dedicated, faithful individuals who serve with a gracious smile, I want to continue teaching at TCA. **The Classical Academy is a school that is rich in character, rich in friendship, and rich in quality**. I am thrilled to be part of this richness; this fuels my desire to teach.

Janna Rombocos, Cottage School 7th Lang Arts

When thinking about why I teach, my initial answer usually came down to the following: **I love students, and I love history**. It seemed like a simple question and that was usually the answer I gave when asked. However, the more I pondered the question, the more **my answer began to evolve**. Yes, I love history, but currently I do not even teach the subject, and I still enjoy teaching. Yes, I love my students, but then came a question I did not know how to answer: Why? Why do I love spending my days answering “How do I insert a picture into my PowerPoint?” at least ten times each class period? Why do I love seeing my students succeed and grow? Why do I love lesson planning for a subject that I did not even go to school to study? It was only after asking these questions that I was able to answer the initial query.

I teach because I love my students, but **I love my students because Carrie Stedman loved me** throughout the five years she taught me, even when I didn’t think I deserved to be loved. I teach because **Alec Egizi and Zach Holmes showed me that history** was more than just amazing stories, it is a way of thinking and looking at the world through other people’s eyes. I teach because **Tim Daggett and Mike Darlington made me push my body** further than I thought it could go, and then to keep going. I teach because **Bruce Casson showed me how important** it is to understand one’s self and to question



# In teaching you cannot see the fruit of a day's work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years. - Jaques Barzun

(continued from page 3) the world around me. I teach because **Cathryn Supplee helped me see all the amazing worlds I could explore through reading**, and because **Jeremy Reed helped me to see the power and joy of putting my words and thoughts into writing**.

I could go on, as I have many more examples, but I think that I have made my point.

Yes, I have always loved history, and yes, I have always loved working with kids, but **that is not why I am able to choose to teach and why I still choose to do it every day**. I was guided by teachers throughout my life who demonstrated what it meant to be a lifelong learner. They demonstrated why it was important to balance mind, body, and spirit and to live your life as a whole person. They were, and are, exemplary citizens. So, when it comes down the question of why I teach, it is, I suppose, a simple answer after all.

**I teach because I had great teachers.**

**Matthew Swiontek, Junior High Computers and History**

**I like kids**, which is a pretty important place to start for anyone thinking of becoming a teacher. I was surprised by this question in an early job interview because I hadn't thought of it that way before. **Like is intrinsically different from value, or enjoy, or appreciate, or the more self-serving gain satisfaction from working with...** I actually like spending my days in the classroom with a group of **characterful, talkative, thoughtful, funny kids**; and that matters because I sometimes see more of my students than I do of my own children—at least it can seem that way. Even though expectations are high and the school day tends to creep insistently into the evening, even though teaching is unpredictable and the task-list never quite checked off, the thing that makes teaching worthwhile is that **spending my days with a group of young learners, full of ideas and energy for life, is without doubt likeable, meaningful, motivating, and fun.**

**My family is full of teachers**—teachers of elementary school, preschool, high school, business managers, CEOs, and post-graduates; teachers of English, history, aerobics, yoga, science, computer tech, flute, art, handwriting analysis, leadership, and decision-making. So, **at the age of five, boldly standing before my kindergarten class, I declared my desire to teach**; and at 23, after a year with IBM (where I taught software to businessmen), I quit my budding computing career to teach English. I wanted to **travel the world, connect with new people and their cultures, and learn unpredictable things as I taught the English language**. Later, it was a passion for child-development, and then for communication skills. Teaching allows me to engage with others to discuss ideas, form worldviews, understand perspectives, and make creative connections between the past, literature, and life. **I feel privileged to be a teacher.**

**Debbie Chinn, High School World Literature and American Literature**

## **WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom**





[Kids] don't remember what you try to teach them. They remember what you are.

Jim Henson in  
*It's Not Easy Being Green:  
And Other Things to Consider*