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## **TEACHER TESTIMONIES: THE IMPACT OF THE RON CLARK ACADEMY**

Going to RCA was an experience of a lifetime. I had no idea what to expect. The energy from the students and staff was contagious. The level of expectation for the students was impeccable. The most noticeable difference was the level of engagement. The room transformations, gamification, and student driven lessons were astonishing.

It's inspiring to know many teachers are engaging students at the highest level and want to reach every child in their class, no matter what it takes. After leaving the RCA, I began to make small changes to model what I had seen. I continue to look for engaging lessons and find them rather easily, now that I know what to look for. I now follow the leaders of RCA and many more educators that continually motivate me to teach "out of the box". The RCA experience changed me forever and has made a huge impact on my students and my teaching.

**Kelly Koch, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA and Social Studies Teacher; Teacher of the Year at Benny Bills and Guild Elementary**

P.S. I would love to go back!

Visiting the Ron Clark Academy was a game changer for me! It was not only inspiring to see creative yet rigorous instruction in action, but also the affect it had on all students. Students were respectful, eloquent, and outgoing, but they were also hungry to learn and excel. To see students who might otherwise never have a chance be equipped with the tools they need to create a bright future for themselves gave me a fire and passion to provide that same opportunity for my own students. I have no doubt in my mind that any teacher, no matter their experience, will benefit greatly from visiting Ron Clark! Whether it be high rigor instructional practice, implementation of a reward system that recognizes student achievement, or feeling personally refreshed and renewed as a teacher, there is something for everyone!

**Quinton Creasy, Art Teacher**

After our RCA visit, I have been more inspired than ever to make learning fun, yet rigorous. It has not only had a positive impact on the students, but also myself and my team. In my opinion, this experience would be beneficial to all teachers, of any age. Seeing the passion and excitement at the RCA is infectious, and is inevitably going to have a major impact on anyone who experiences it!

**Caroline Wigger, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher & Teacher Leader**

Visiting RCA was, without a doubt, the best thing that I've EVER had the opportunity to do in my 23 years of teaching...you come back ready to hit the ground running. The experience will absolutely fill your heart and help you rediscover your passion for teaching!

**Stacy Porter, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**  
**2001 Union and Sumner County Teacher of the Year**

RCA was, by far, the best professional development I have experienced in my 15 years as a teacher. To spend a day with some of the country's best teachers and to soak in the environment of the Academy is almost a surreal experience, but the best part is knowing that what is done there can be implemented at any school. Their 3 pillars of discipline, rigor and fierce love/support only require an "all in" mindset of a school. It was truly a game changer for me!

**Jennifer Arnold, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher**  
**2017 Teacher of the Year**

I've been teaching for over 10 years, and RCA was, by far, the most impactful learning opportunity I've ever experienced! It has improved my mindset and impacted my daily instruction. The trip changed me.

**Jean Hesson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher & Teacher Leader**  
**2012 Teacher of the Year**

By far the best professional development I have ever experienced. In my opinion nothing out there could come close to this surreal time I had with my colleagues. I hope everyone in our building gets the opportunity to go, and I would love to go again someday, because there was so much to see. It has also been a breath of fresh air to be in and out of classrooms and see, firsthand, the impact of this experience by seeing these teachers put strategies and beliefs into action immediately.

**Susan Rogers, Lead Educator**

The Ron Clark Academy experience is one that I will never forget. I am well into my 22nd year of teaching and love what I do. I had no idea that I could be so impacted by one experience. The approach to education at RCA is unique and creative, yet it is extremely rigorous. They prove that learning can be engaging and exciting while being demanding at the same time. The teachers, students, and parents all give 110% to learning and to building relationships with each other. All hands are on deck at all times to create a one of a kind environment for learning and growing! The energy and passion that is found at RCA is contagious! Any teacher fortunate enough to attend The Ron Clark Academy will be challenged to take teaching and learning to a whole new level and will be forever impacted by the amazing experience that it provides!

**Becky Jones, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA/Social Studies Teacher**  
**Teacher of the Year, 2012**

I'm so excited about what this experience has done for me and my classroom!

I've always thought I was a "good" teacher....I work hard to plan lessons, keep the rigor up, analyze data, etc. I love my kids, and I've always tried to show that as well. So, when I headed to Atlanta to see RCA, I was excited, but not really sure what it could do for me. I found myself in tears the minute I walked through the door! The energy and enthusiasm of not only the adults, but also the students, is overwhelming!!! It makes you want to do things better from the beginning!

Probably my greatest take away for my students, besides the energy and enthusiasm, is the way the students take ownership of their learning. When speaking in class, the RCA students stand and face their classmates to share their thinking. The students don't raise their hands, but instead stand and speak. I have implemented this with my classes, and I have noticed a HUGE difference in their engagement in conversations, as well as their ability and willingness to use accountable talk to agree/disagree with another student's thinking. One tiny little adjustment, and I think it has had a huge and lasting impact on these kids!!

Also, the room transformations at RCA overwhelmed me a little bit because they were on such a huge scale. However, I found that I could do a transformation that worked for me, was not overly expensive, and completely caught my students' attentions. They worked harder doing "math operations" in surgical gear than they've worked all year. Included are some pictures of our day yesterday. I'll be glad to provide more information about the setup of the lesson if you need it!

Some feedback from my students about the operating room Math..... When asked "How did learning Math by competing with the other class by performing successful surgeries on division problems impact you?"

- I enjoyed that it had something to do with operations and doing successful surgeries. It made me work harder, but still made it fun!
- Learning like this pushed me to work harder.
- It really helped me feel more excited about learning.
- Making it a competition made me want to finish.
- For me, it had to do with the competition because I want to get rewarded for working hard and doing my best.
- We are children (lol), so we like doing fun things combined with learning.
- I don't really like Math, but that day it was fun because we got to feel grown up by using doctor stuff.
- I was proud of myself for how hard I worked!

**Leslie Yates, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math and Science Teacher**