

Jennifer Yao

Salutatorian Speech

Welcome again, friends, family, teachers, administrators and, of course, my fellow classmates. In the process of writing this speech, just about every classmate with whom I came into contact begged me to keep it as short as possible so they could get their diploma. Granted, other suggestions included, “You better be funny or I’m sleeping through your speech” and “Make sure you quote Lady Gaga!” But I think “keep it short” definitely came up the most. So for my classmates who just want to graduate, I will try to keep it as short as possible. Before I start, though, I want to give a shout-out to the band members and other underclassmen in the crowd. Trust me, I know how you feel; three years of having to watch class after class walk by and move this little tassel thing from one side to the other is quite frustrating. But I promise, before you know it, this will be you. Right up until that last minute before the final bell rings, though, it will feel like an eternity. So, hang in there!

I could stand up here and talk about the amazing teachers, unforgettable memories, and interminable friendships that have composed our high school experience. Or I could talk about all of the skills we have mastered as a class, whether it be academically, artistically or socially. But I am going to talk about another art that we, as a class, have mastered as well: the art of procrastination. As

I was sitting on my bed with my laptop, playing solitaire with one hand, talking on the phone with the other, and throwing around ridiculous speech ideas that ranged from “Winnie the Pooh” to the conservation of energy law, it suddenly came to me. Well, what was I doing right then and there? Oh yeah, did I mention my moment of inspiration came to me just a couple hours after this speech was due?

Just so my teachers don’t go crazy, I definitely do not advocate procrastination in any way, shape, or form. Trust me, you do not want to be the girl who has not started the 2 5-page papers and lab report due the very next day... But I do want to remind everyone that high school was not only about moving from class to class and doing homework at night. No. It was about discovering our interests, fulfilling dreams, and having time to interact with the interesting people around us. It was about winning the football championship, spending late nights rehearsing Legally Blonde, and going to Starbucks to have some of the most insightful conversations with friends. In fact, procrastination is the wrong word; instead, we were “discovering ourselves.” It is just, unfortunately for some of our teachers, a lot of this “discovering ourselves” sometimes got in the way of doing work, but hey, we are here, aren’t we? We have made it through relatively unscathed.

So what does “discovering ourselves” entail? Well, in some cases, we found our deepest passions, in others, we found others who inspire us; and overall, we

have found integrity as a class. I mean, go back to that wide-eyed, bewildered, rowdy class of 2012 that walked into the hallways of Daniel Hand for the first time. Now as I look out, I see that same class of 2012, still rowdy as ever, but confident and sure of ourselves. Throughout the years, we have watched Mean Girls with Mr. Holleran. We have started facebook study groups only to end in the saying, “Well, you only live once. YOLO!” (Sorry, I had to work it in somehow!) We have sat up a little straighter as Mrs. Littel walked by, and we have filled out blue forms like there was no tomorrow. During that process, we felt like it would never end; but, now everything seems to have happened in the blink of an eye.

Remember, no matter where you are in the future, find some time to “procrastinate!” and to discover a little bit more about yourself! Congratulations, class of 2012!