



High School Graduation

June 10, 2012

Speech by Rachel Levy, Class of 2012

Good afternoon students, teachers, families, and friends.

I am honored that you chose me to speak at our graduation today. Since I was little, it has always been a dream of mine to give a speech to an audience of more than 700 people...a speech directly following John Burghardt.

While the reason you chose John is clear to me, I'm honestly a little confused about why I was chosen to speak here today. It was only in the last year or so when I realized something that many of you still may not know: the library is not the only room in our school. I know, I was blown away too.

And I'm serious. Before school: library cubby number three. Every mini break: library cubby number three. During lunch period: cubby number three. And after school? You guessed it! Cubby number three...but at the Tenleytown Library.

I can only assume that I'm speaking today because of my unparalleled attendance at GDS dances and my athletic prowess and leadership. Women's volleyball, men's soccer, and track & field won the MAC championships this year. And for that, I say you're welcome.

I had very specific intentions when I wrote this graduation speech. I wanted to say something that would break boundaries, do what no speech, lifetime movie or commercial has ever done before: not make my dad cry. Now, that sounds like it should be easy, but if you've ever seen him watch that Sarah McLachlan SPCA commercial...You know how hard it is going to be.

So, to avoid fatherly tears, I'll keep it simple. Graduation speakers are supposed to give advice about how to go out into the real world. Well, during my time of library hibernation, I've learned a couple of vital skills that I'm more than happy to share with all of you. For example, I think I've mastered the face that says "ahem, this is a library. No talking!" without actually having to say,

"This is a library. No talking!" Seniors: This face may come in handy for many of us later tonight when our family members reminisce for far too long about our awkward middle school years.

Still, I am in no position to give you all any real advice. But that doesn't matter because I don't think the Class of 2012 needs it. All the "real world knowledge" that a graduation speaker could give, we already have stored up in our own little library—a library full of advice and life lessons rather than *Hamlet* and the *Hunger Games*. You may be wondering, "How do I access said surplus of information—this database," if you will? Well, it's simple. We can remember what GDS has taught us in the same way that we gain access to information in our library: an off-campus password!

In our case, the password may be a teacher's name or a favorite memory that brings to mind something that we've learned and experienced during our time at GDS...So step aside Evelyn and Allison—our beloved librarians—while I take the Class of 2012 on a tour of the stacks.

From the Current Events Forum, we know how to argue. Throughout high school, we've learned how to engage in professional and constructive debates about some of the most important issues of our generation: vandalism and upkeep of a communal space, openness to other political perspectives, and those squirrels that kept eating the globe made out of seeds outside the forum during freshman year.

We know how—and how NOT to—dance from our assemblies. Karen Epstein has been gracious enough to describe and demonstrate certain dance moves in so much detail that we don't even need to go to dances to be made "appropriately" uncomfortable.

Now, finding the information we want is not always so easy. Sometimes, our search results come up with too much information. Well, GDS has even prepared us for that. I know many of us seniors have spent hours of sifting and skimming before we can find just one of Oladipo's tweets that doesn't make us laugh.

Even though we have learned never to trust a source without a qualified author, we can learn a lot from the anonymous feedback that we have received during our time at GDS. For example, one day I was about to ride my bike home, and I found a note in my bike basket, my big red milk crate, which many of you have come to know as "parking lot trash can." The note said, "Sweet

ride. signed winky smiley face." It seemed I had a poet on my hands—maybe even a secret admirer! But I was too frustrated with the fact that my bike had become a communal wastebasket to appreciate the compliment and threw away the note once I got home.

So here's my advice: disregard the trashy feedback that people give you, but keep the winky smiley faces. Also, if you have the choice between saddle bags and a big red milk crate for your bike, choose the saddle bags.

Even if I can't offer any inspirational advice beyond library and bike etiquette, there is one thing I'm sure of. The library has taught me that no matter what we discover and remember when we research, we must always cite our sources. So, seniors, this is what I can tell you. After you scold your parents for making you be in too many pictures with your weird cousins, tell them how much you appreciate and love them.

Also, remember who is responsible for what we have learned at GDS: the teachers. Whether it is their dance moves during the flash mob or the way our teachers bring both humor and compassion into the classroom, we owe it all to them. I will never meet more caring, supportive and brilliant people. So let's give our teachers a round of applause...Dad, I know your affection for my teachers rivals my own, but you almost made it the whole speech without crying! So try to keep it together!

Because I had all of the information I could ever need, you may wonder why I decided to leave the library. Just like I eventually had to spend lunches on the patio or at Peete's Pizza instead of at cubby number three, we have to leave the comfortable corner cubby that is GDS sooner or later. It's our time. Lucky for us, we will always have our own off-campus password to all that we've learned and all that we've shared.

So GDS Class of 2012, I love you guys and congratulations!