

RACHEL HOBBY- VALEDICTORIAN

When I was brainstorming this speech, I first looked up graduation speech cliches. Not because I really wanted to avoid them; no, I was actually considering making this the most cliché speech ever, on purpose. Cheesy quote, untested advice, the whole shebang. Since then, I've been talked out of doing so, as it would probably be less fun for you guys than for me. So, Mom, I will allow you to hold onto your title of most cliché graduation speech giver in history. I did keep a couple things, though.

First, congratulations are in order to us for making it here, to the end of our senior year of high school! There's only about the length of this speech and thirty? forty? more minutes to go before we are all officially PD alumni.

I've attended PDS since January of second grade -- I know, kind of a strange time to show up -- but as a result, I've known some of you all for a really long time. In an effort to procure material for this speech, I looked through old photos and found some of myself with a friend, looking a total of eight years old, in front of a zoo, on a school trip that I don't even remember. Jasleen, I also found a couple of us a few years older taking turns wearing a headband with a giant turkey on it. I do not need the context for those.

Some of you all I've met more recently, and for a couple of you, well, it's really nice to meet you. So, bearing that in mind, I can't call this speech in good conscience entirely representative of the class of 2022, but I think you guys will be able to relate to at least some of it. It's been four years of high school classes, both in person and online, that I'm sure none of us ever slept through. Four years of homework always turned in promptly, four years of clubs and sports and lunch breaks and a little more than three years of the daily losing game of attempting to find a parking spot. I still remember the time I was running late to a chemistry test and there was actually somehow a negative number of parking spots in the west lot. I ended up parallel parking in the gravel lot and received an email promptly imploring me to move my car or else.

My time here at PDS has been somewhat of a rollercoaster, especially with the events of the last two years, and I know that all of yours have been too, but I can see how much we've all grown in our time together.

From stomping around in the marshes of Fort Fisher -- and us girls getting to stay in fancy beach houses while the boys were in dorm rooms. Sorry guys --

To the seventh grade Atlanta trip, which was fun besides the fact that the bus had no air conditioning, and then the bus later broke down at the zoo... and then I'm pretty sure one of the buses also got into a minor car accident --

To getting to hang out with and bike with you all in Boston last August.

There have been the Field Days and P.E. Halloween events of lower school; the introduction of the new language program and the installation of middle school capstones - with our grade, of course, starring as the Guinea Pigs- ; the constant middle school presentations on harassment; AMCs, Math Madness, and Purple Comet contests; obligatory ninth grade health and whole-food-plant-based-diet documentaries, middle and high school sports... So many people in this class have defined themselves to be both fantastic athletes and gifted scholars, and I can't wait to see where you guys go with your talents.

I have a lot of memories of the food here, too, which I will miss dearly, and I know I'm not alone in that. I won't miss the twenty or so tenth grade boys that kept skipping me in line, though. By the way, the recipe for Bang Bang Shrimp was sent out in the Thursday notes like two years ago, in case any of you guys want to try your hand at being a chef in your residence hall's kitchen next year.

I want to finish up by giving thanks to everyone here who's helped us make it to this point. Family members, teachers, friends...

I personally want to say thank you to those in my family who are here supporting me today. And Mom and Dad, thanks for always being super supportive of me and pushing me to be the best person I can be. Alex, I know you had to take time out of your super cool software engineering internship to be here, so thanks for coming today. I'll be at Georgia Tech next year, ready to bother you in person.

I want to thank my teachers as well. I will never forget moments like the worldly advice shared in Ms. Castro's classes, Pi Day celebrations with Mr. Lucia, physics labs with Dr. Makous. Also the one screaming goat figurine that emulated our feelings completely after tests in that class... AP Physics students know what I'm talking about.

But I want to thank you all for exposing me to and sharing with me your passions and instilling in me a love for learning. I will always be grateful for your role in shaping who I am as a person. I am glad to have the honor of carrying your signatures in my special edition Moby-Dick picture book, for children 3-5 years of age. Thank you again for the book, Ms. Castro. Dr. Crumley, she obviously got me it because I love and appreciate Herman Melville's work of art. :)

I also want to thank my friends for being amazing people and absolutely crushing it throughout high school. It's been real you guys. Now we're off to different universities, and I'm gonna miss you all so much.

It's been a long four years of high school, of learning and discovering who we are and what kind of people we want to be. Four years is long enough — I know you all are ready to graduate and don't need me prolonging it for you up here. So congratulations on everything you've accomplished in your journeys here. I hope you're all as excited as me for the next one.