



High School Graduation

June 11, 2023

Speech by Drew Cowan, Class of 2023

Hello Everyone!

My name is Drew Cowan and I am so honored to speak here on this beautiful and monumental day for the class of 2023! While I am thrilled to be standing up here, I know there are 125 passionate and beautifully thoughtful voices that could have spoken on behalf of our class.

As a class we have faced so many challenges, and as we sit here today, we have overcome every single one. While I'm not going to recite every type of adversity Class of 23 has experienced, I would like to remind everyone that we did have to eat lunch in the middle school garage everyday as a part of pandemic schooling. It sucked. But our presence here today is evidence that we kicked every school year's ass and somehow came out here incredibly unified. This is the moment we have thought about since that treacherous 2019-2020 school year, but now we truly have everything to look forward to.

Just for a moment, however, I would like to relive early 2019, but even before I was a GDS student. An integral part of the GDS application process for newly admitted students, if you have forgotten, is shadow day in the Spring, and that's one day I cannot forget. I was assigned to follow along a very memorable member of Class of 22, Eli Fabre. Eli led me from class to class while settling my nerves about the transition from our shared middle school. Walking through the hallways that day was completely mind-blowing to me. In just that one day at GDS I got Dunkin Donuts from Club meetings, played ultimate frisbee on the field, participated in a Min Wang senior-level Chinese class, dipped my toes into Pre-Calculus with Kathleen, and for the first time ever, I sat in the forum surrounded by DC's brightest students. And for the first time since 1st grade I was in the same school as my older brother Max. I remember coming home to my

parents raving about that day and all my ninth grade brain could describe it as was “feeling like a summer camp”.

Now I’m sure I know what you’re thinking, especially all the parents. You would not want the institution that is supposed to foster your child’s growth into adulthood and teach them the ways of the world to feel like a camp... But hear me out. To me, as someone who did not go to summer camp every year, the word camp meant somewhere you went to explore, reunite with or meet some of your favorite friends, get mentored by incredible adults, and do some wild stuff like water skiing. While there is no Hopper water skiing team yet, the rest of those camp attributes could be applied to GDS. This school has provided us with endless opportunities to intellectually explore and challenge ourselves through minimester, assemblies, complex readings of all types of literature in English class, and through student-led organizations such as Student Voices, the Augur Bit, and the Environmental Task Force. And much like a camp, there is never a dull moment with GDS kids. Additionally, I could go on and on about the inspiring faculty that carry our school on their shoulders with their passion for educating, and who have truly led us to becoming who we are today.

Now, as a senior in the midst of graduating, I think I can say as a class we have successfully made GDS our camp. Our place to create what we want and build long lasting connections with comfort and support.

But like I said before, these years were not smooth and simple, which brings me to my next story.

Back in late March of this year many of us in the senior class were scrambling to find a singular quote for the yearbook that would either sum up our years at GDS or that we would want to be remembered by. Every time senior quotes were brought up in the forum I would turn to my phone and look up the word “quotes” with a new word in front of it each time. I looked up “funny quotes”, “dumb quotes”, “inspiring quotes”, and even “philosophical quotes”. My hunt came up dry and I ended up settling for one my dad half-jokingly recommended to me one night. My Dad always has a sports history fact to share, so the first time he said the quote I laughed it off as another stupid but amusing thing Mike Tyson said. Mike Tyson is not the person I think either of my parents want me to follow in life, but after sitting with his words for a couple months, they have really had an impact on me. His quote reads: “Everybody has a plan ‘till they get punched in the mouth”. These words are pretty well-known and can occasionally be heard repeated by ESPN reporters as they describe an athletic hardship a team or player had to face.

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Aside from its meaning in the ring, that quote turns out to be quite applicable to students in our position. Here today we all have many plans for next year: Going to school out west, up in the northeast, in the Rockies, in Europe, or Canada, or completing a 5-year Bachelor's and Master's joint-degree program, or even taking a Gap Year to experience life in Costa Rica, potentially competing in the Olympic Games like Tatiana!!! Or summiting the tallest Mountains on the Globe like Ben. But within our plans there is no guarantee that next year will go smoothly. We will face new hardships, failures, and minor annoyances that may discombobulate our plans and goals. But it won't be shocking: we've definitely had our fair share of punches thrown at us, but once again we are still standing... and today we are graduating! I think Mike Tyson would consider that a roaring win in the ring.

So my final message to you all and to myself is to find your so-called "camp" again and if you get punched in the mouth while doing so, oh well... it would not have been the first time we've recovered from a punch.

I want to say thank you to my family, my friends, my teachers, all of Georgetown Day, and especially the Class of 2023.

I love you guys and thank you again.