



High School Graduation

June 8, 2025
Evelyn Chen, Class of 2025

Good afternoon, everyone! My name is Evelyn Chen, and Jeremiah and I are lucky enough to have been chosen by our incredible classmates to speak today. While we are both so honored to stand up here, we know that any one of our classmates could've spoken on behalf of our amazing graduating class. When Jeremiah and I found out we were selected for this, we joked that we would stand up here together and do a freestyle rap instead of two heartfelt speeches. Luckily for you all, we decided to spare you from that and just do the speeches.

I want to start by telling you all about my earliest memory of GDS. As I was attending an enormous middle school, I realized I needed a change. Since it was COVID, all of the school interviews, tours, and information sessions were on Zoom. So I never got to experience any of the schools in person. And it might be hard to believe, but GDS was not my top choice.

As I was answering lots of application questions from different schools, there was one question that stood out from the rest. The most annoying question anyone could ever receive was, of course, from GDS. That question was, "How would you describe your philosophy of life?" That is a very heavy question to be asking a 14 year old. So, I started to associate GDS with the memory of sitting at my dining room table with my mom for 5 hours trying to answer this question. I hated every minute of it, sorry Mom. So, in my 14 year old mind, this question did not put GDS at the top of my list.

But I do remember the exact moment I realized GDS was the place for me. I remember I was sitting in my bed, on my laptop, when I randomly decided to Google a tour of GDS. I had no idea what the school looked like. The only thing I knew was what their website looked like and that they really enjoy asking kids annoying questions. Little did I know that when I went to YouTube and typed in "Georgetown Day High School Tour," I would watch the video that would change my life.

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That video was a Vogue-inspired 73 Questions Interview with Russell, walking around the high school answering very random questions. This is the moment I fell in love with GDS. Now, it might seem a little shallow that I would choose a school based on a 15-minute video tour, but I saw so much more in that video than what meets the eye. Upon seeing the forum, I immediately saw a place that breeds connection and fosters a close community. Hearing the Head of School talk not only about academics but just about life, I saw a school that sees and values each student as a whole human being. That is why I chose GDS.

GDS has and continues to be a place that encourages kids to be the truest versions of themselves and creates a community that supports each dimension of every student. I know I'm not supposed to reveal my identity, but I think for the sake of this speech, the mascot gods can forgive me. I have had the great, and some would say highest, honor of being the school mascot for the past 2 years. And while the suit can get really, really hot and sweaty and gross, I've enjoyed it. It's given me an opportunity to see the school and especially our grade in a new way. Sitting front row at countless volleyball games, I can truly see how united we are and how much we enjoy just being around each other.

The Class of 2025 has been told on multiple occasions that we are special. What other grade crowds Russell's kitchen for breakfast after a not-so-successful senior sunrise? Or has had 30-something seniors join FATA just because. Or packs the Jelleff rec center for Ken Carson Elite's one win of their season and gets Benjamin Stein and his baby-blue Vespa to come to their very unfortunate semi-finals loss. Or gets the whole grade to come out to the field to celebrate the beautiful wedding between Eli and Henry on prank day.

Needless to say, our grade has done a lot together. From embarrassingly falling off paddle boards on our Freshman year overnight to flipping over each other's kayaks on our Senior year overnight, we have all made memories and friendships we can never lose. We've been a grade that prioritizes joy and humor over competition and greed. A grade that respects and embraces each other's differences. A grade that picks each other up instead of knocking each other down. A grade that shows up for each other.

As our high school experience comes into rear view, I can admit it, I've shed some tears. I've made irreplaceable memories that will last me a lifetime, and I've made friends that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world, and I'm sure my classmates would agree.

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While writing this speech, I took a look at my response to that annoying application question. So, to quote my awkward 14 year old self in front of hundreds of people, “My guiding principles of life are to be optimistic about the future, to learn from my mistakes in order to improve, and that I am a better person when I am part of a team.” I know, very philosophical, right? Four years later, I still see some things that I agree with. Because, looking around me today, I see my team. I see the people that I’ve laughed and cried with. The people who have shown me that it’s fun to embarrass yourself. The people who have taught me to find joy in doing hard things. The people who have brought out the very best version of myself.

So to elaborate on my answer to that application question from 4 years ago, I have three pieces of advice for the Class of 2025:

1. Be optimistic about your future and just say yes to doing more things. Because you can never know what you might find if you just open that one door
2. Make mistakes. Make as many mistakes as you can because that’s how you improve
3. Find your team. Wherever you decide to go next, find and surround yourself with the people who make you who you want to be. The people who will make you cry laughing but who can also be the people you rely on when things get hard

Because that’s what I’ve had these last four years. And it’s been pretty nice, I’ve had the best team I could ever ask for. You guys have been the most funny, supportive, and just kind group of people to spend four years with. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I truly can’t say it enough. Thank you. Thank you for making me laugh and inspiring me every single day. I am forever in debt to each of you for shaping me into the person I am today. I know that each of you are bringing something special into this world and I can’t wait to see where you all will go next. I love you all.

I now have the great privilege of handing the podium off to a pretty cool guy. A very good friend of mine, the incredibly tall, sometimes nice, and rarely funny Jeremiah Farr. Thank you.

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