



High School Graduation
June 8, 2025
Speech by Jeremiah Farr, Class of 2025

Hi Everyone,

I am Jeremiah Farr.

First, I just want to say how honored I feel to be here, on this stage, speaking to all of you and all of my friends in the class of 2025. I feel proud to be able to give back to and share my gratitude for this community.

I also just want another shout out for THE GDS hopper, the lifeblood of the class of 2025, and my second period breakfast buddy, Evelyn Chen.

I wanted to start this speech with the moment that I realized that something was weird about this place. I don't mean actually weird about this place, like the 20-person cult that was started in the band room at orientation, two weeks before freshman year even started. I kind of knew what I was getting into on that front.

I mean weird, like when I realized that GDS had a different environment from any place I've ever been. It was the first week of freshman year. It was time for the Student Council elections, which I had signed up for, but promptly forgotten about. To me, the only thing that made this unique from any other Thursday was that it was pajama day.

I should preface this with the fact that I went to a small K through 8 school, where I had the same 19 classmates for 9 straight years. That should give you a sense of the social awareness I had going into 9th grade. Anyway, I decided that, to gain street cred in this new environment, I'd wear a matching flannel pajama set.

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After first period though, when everyone rushed to the English hallway to hear the candidates' speeches, I realized I'd made a huge mistake. When my name was called, I stood up in front of everyone, in my PJs and slippers, and gave a straight-faced, earnest speech, promising to get rid of finals, throw more parties for our class, and, I promise to you, this is a direct quote from that speech, "make real progress towards stopping climate change."

At any other school, maybe any other place in the entire world, the kid who shows up in pajamas, promises to solve all of the world's problems, and repeatedly called former 9th grade Dean Abe Pachikara "Gabe," would have already sent the hope of ever finding success out the window.

But not in this weird place.

Instead, here, people encourage each other to take risks. Difference is celebrated. Grace is given. People love each other as they are, while also always challenging each other to learn and grow. Here, the seven foot nervous kid in his pajamas pledging to end climate change was surprised to feel at home. That is GDS's weird.

This weirdness comes from many places. It comes from the teachers, who care about what they do, and the students that they teach. Nothing says "weird" like trying to focus on a challenging chemistry quiz in Polly's class while she ranks AI-generated pictures of the presidents based on who looks hottest with a mullet. Or analyzing our most recent reading in Sidibe's class while 3 classmates do pushups on the floor.

In every classroom, students are treated with respect and inspired by teachers who are passionate about their subjects and their love for teaching.

The class of 2025 is full of weird students. Students who are incredibly bright and intellectual, and then create jaw-dropping art. Students who are truly kind and generous, and then dominate at their sport, or in the case of our men's basketball players, try their very best. Students who go from winning awards and trophies to throwing on their goggles and going on late-night water gun killing sprees. Students who genuinely have love in their hearts for and unique relationships with all 129 of their classmates.

It is true, not every decision we've made has been perfect. We shouldn't have given Eli a bat and a piñata filled with hard candy about 10 feet away from a TV. We should have turned off the senior WhatsApp a lot earlier when an argument started about skip day themes. But through it

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all, it is truly the unique and valuable influences that each person has that makes the class of 2025 so different.

Moving forward, I hope that GDS keeps its wonderful, welcoming weirdness. I hope that it remains what it was when it started: a place where students can challenge authority and share valued input on the policies and changes that affect them, and a place where teachers love their jobs and feel just as excited to come to school as I have each day.

GDS was created as a place where truly all different perspectives are valued. In the past few years, I have heard from teachers who worry that the student-forward nature of GDS is slipping away. They have said that, at times, GDS's focus on inclusion becomes misconstrued to instead describe a place where any voice that pushes back on the common beliefs is cast aside.

These teachers are the backbone of the GDS community and environment, and their concerns must be addressed. GDS is truly a place for the celebration of diversity, and to keep it that way takes communication and work.

I know that there will always be people who care more about convention than expression, more about rules than risks, more about control than community. I understand that there are always broken things to be fixed, and issues to bring up. My hope for GDS is that it is always a place where people are working to fix the broken things, and always bringing up the issues. I hope that GDS keeps the environment of self-advocacy and ungovernability that it has instilled in the members of the class of 2025.

I also want to use this opportunity to thank the people that have made GDS such a special place for me. To my teachers and all of the GDS faculty that have helped all of us on our journey, thank you. To my family, who put up with an unbelievable amount, but remained incredibly supportive and accommodating, thank you.

And finally, to my peers in the class of 2025: I know that this is a special group. You are all capable of making real positive change in the world, and I have full confidence that you will. Our time together has come to a close, but I will never forget the lessons and memories that each of you has given me. For every single moment of the last four years, thank you.

As we all move out of GDS, into college, and beyond, I just have one request of each of my peers. Make every place that you go just a little bit more GDS weird.

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