



PROVIDENCE DAY
SCHOOL

Valedictory Address to the Class of 2026

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Good morning everyone.

If you know me or my family, then you know education has always been a huge part of my life. The other day, my friends thought it was funny when I told them my mom would exclusively give me books, puzzles, and one year, a New York Times subscription for Christmas. I was 7 and asked for a Nintendo switch by the way.

Growing up, I thought a good education was about dedicating yourself to the pursuit of knowledge. Reading books and learning new words and doing math problems faster than ever before. Learning, learning, and more learning.

While that does make a good education, it doesn't quite make a great one.

I started at Providence Day in middle school, not knowing very many people. A few weeks into sixth grade, the Middle School spelling bee came around, and unbeknownst to me, I was competing in it. Thanks mom. I ended up getting second place, which I was perfectly fine with because it meant I didn't have to move on to the next round. A few days later, my name was announced in assembly, and I had to stand up. I remember thinking, "God, people are gonna think I'm so nerdy."

But then assembly ended, and I went back to class, and as I was walking someone came up to me and said, "Hey you got second in the spelling bee, right? Good job, that's really impressive." A few hours later, someone else said the same. And for the next couple weeks, people remembered me as the "spelling bee girl" but in a positive way, and my embarrassment turned into pride.

That's when I learned that Providence Day is a place full of ANDS. You could be a athlete AND be on student government. You could be on the soccer team AND do a cappella. I could do german debate AND be part of pickleball club. And that's not just because this school has so many different things to offer, but more so because this

community creates a safe and encouraging environment to actually show up and try those things.

That kind of support is hard to explain, but I know it when I see it. I see it when Mr. Dickson tells someone “great goal yesterday” at the beginning of class. I see it when classmates who never did theater a day in their lives, audition for the play senior year. I see it in the talent show, when musical performances and taekwondo demos are both met with standing ovations. I see that support anywhere and everywhere—in the teachers, the students, the admin, the staff, the alumni, the parents. All of us, all the time.

They are how we got not just a good education, but a great one.

Twenty years from now, none of us are going to bring up our GPAs at dinner. We’re going to bring up the stories. We’ll remember tirelessly pedaling the 40-mile bike ride on senior venture, only to be passed by Mr. Ludwig on an ebike. We’ll remember the spirit our class brought to football games, as evidenced by the hundreds of dollars each of us spent on horse heads and American paraphernalia to fit the student section themes. We’ll even remember how fast we slid our phones in our pockets the second we spotted Mr. Mitchell down the hall.

None of those memories happen without the people in them.

I’m so grateful for my teachers, who showed up to class everyday with smiles on their faces and a genuine love for what they do, even when us students didn’t reciprocate that. You’ve inspired each and every one of us, and your dedication doesn’t go unnoticed. I’m grateful for my friends, who never let life get boring, whether that’s late night studying with a couple of pizzas or getting meat in my hair during a food fight. A huge thank you to my whole family, especially the ones here today. To my parents, Mom and Dad, you showed me the world and then spent eighteen years teaching me how to navigate it. I love you both more than I can say and appreciate every sacrifice you’ve made for me. And finally, to my sister, who’s been my encouraging competition for the last 18 years, I think we can agree I’ve won now. No but really, I love you and can’t wait to spend the next 3 years in college together.

As we start this next chapter of our lives, I urge all of you to be deliberate about who you surround yourself with. Seek out the people who turn your ORs into ANDs. Who don’t make you choose between who you are and who you want to be. Who show up unconditionally and cheer boisterously. A good education gives you knowledge, but a great one gives you people. I think life works the same way. So don’t settle for good. Choose great. Choose your people and celebrate them—just like we’re doing today.

Thank you, and congratulations to the class of 2026. Go chargers!