

The Valedictorian's Speech

Good evening, parents, teachers, administrators, and friends. It is with great honor that I welcome you all to SIHA's graduating class of 2021.

This year marks 10 years since SIHA was founded. Of those 10 years, I had the pleasure to be part of SIHA for 8 years. I must say, I never expected to be here today. If I were to tell my past self that I would be doing a valedictorian speech, I probably would've called myself crazy. Putting together this speech has enabled me to reflect on my time at SIHA.

SIHA has pretty much been my second home. I've been surrounded by teachers, Rabbis, friends and their parents, some of which have become like family to me. And I hope we continue to remain in touch for years to come.

I cannot express my gratitude enough to everyone who got me here today, but I would still like to give a humble thanks to these amazing individuals.

I want to say thank you to my parents for always pushing me to my full potential, even if they didn't fully understand what I was trying to explain to them.

I also want to say thank you to all of the teachers at SIHA that pushed me to do better and work harder. In particular, I would like to give thanks to MRS G.... ORTIZ.... - thank you for always believing in me and all your speeches, I know I've been a bit of a headache at times, but you guys rock.

Lastly- to my classmates, I would like to say thank you for being a part of my life for these 8 years. It has been a gift to be able to grow together and spend the last 8 years learning and believing in the Torah and what it commands. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about our religion, beliefs, customs and laws. One of my favorite memories from school was learning of the Gemara with Rabbi Kuritsky. It was a very fulfilling lesson that I found extremely rewarding to learn. I loved being able to ask questions and discuss what we learned in class with my classmates all under the wise guidance of Rabbi Kuritsky. I can't help but feel somewhat dismayed at the thought of there being children who cannot receive such guidance and wisdom. Yet, this is a happy day so I would like to focus on the positives.

As we get ready to move on to the next chapter of our academic career, we are going to face even larger challenges. I won't lie, I feel a bunch of emotions like anxiety, eagerness, and overwhelming uncertainty. When I think about starting high school and I get nervous, I choose to think about how I and my classmates adapted in the past and I know that I- we can adapt and overcome this new challenge.

When I look back on who I was, especially the last couple of years, I realized that I have grown a lot in that time. And I think that all of today's graduates can relate. We have conquered procrastination, lack of discipline, nights with endless homework, projects and countless other

obstacles. Sadly, this is my last year at SIHA. There were a lot of great memories and lessons that I will take with me into high school and beyond. I'm looking forward to what the future holds, for all of us. So let's take today to acknowledge that we are the champions. We made it and let's be proud!

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