



ST JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MALAYSIA
(TROPICANA PJ CAMPUS)



Cheah Hui Qin

Students' Choice Speaker

IBDP Class of 2018

Graduation Ceremony Speech Transcript

Good evening Brothers, teachers, parents, foster parents, siblings and last but not least, my fellow friends. I am as surprised as I am delighted to be selected as the students' choice speaker, especially when I am not the most eloquent and outspoken person among my friends in the hall. I guess this provides a depiction that being here, despite perhaps not being the best, we have always been provided with opportunities to learn and to grow - for which I have been incredibly grateful.

And of course, journeys of personal growth have been shaped by and would not have been as meaningful if without the people here, whom I would like to dedicate this speech to.

I couldn't be more grateful for the teachers that I have had for the past two years. They are definitely teachers of genuine passion for their subject areas, but they are also teachers who understand. They have always offered to stay back after school to tend to the questions that we may have, and even wrote us motivational cards before our final exams. These gestures are simple, yet uncommon. And because of that they have motivated me to see the beauty and value in what I learn, and have inspired me to be a better person day in, day out. Particularly, I could trace my passion for community development right now to Ms. Smyth, whom we jokingly referred to as the Jeffrey Sachs fangirl, with her excellent Economics classes and her heartfelt sharing of her past volunteering experiences. Once, she told me that her reason to teach was because, "Good teachers bring about some of the greatest social impact." Knowing that I will depart from the school dedicating myself in areas of community development, I can testify that what she said is true.

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I will now dedicate the next half of my speech to the next group of people that matter - the graduating class of 2018, my fellow friends.

While preparing for this speech, I came across a photo of all of us sitting in a circle on the first day of our orientation. Back then, we never knew that the people in that circle were to then play such a crucial part in making our two years at the school memorable. Priya was sitting right beside me in the photo and back then, little did I know that she would become the person I would later recall always stuffing food into my mouth when I was too burned down to eat amidst the IBDP deadlines. It's amazing that within two years, we could associate something with everyone in that circle - Annabel now being only the Annabel we know for her iconic "Easy only mah" and the enormous Sabahan pride encompassed in her petite figure; on the other extreme end of the spectrum, we have our eldest and biggest Amanda who is extremely demanding, but extremely genuine at the same time. And Francis, despite being absent on the day of orientation, is now who I recall as the one who ate my chocolate while I was away in the States. Nonetheless, I believe all of us would agree that he has brought so much joy to us. Until today, we have created numerous iconic features of our own cohort, which I had to reluctantly omit in this 4-minute speech.

Over these two years, times full of jokes, DMCs, card-throwings, card games and serious discussions have enlivened our study periods. Post-exam outings, as well as trips to Bentong, Sabah, Sarawak and Malacca are equally memorable. With each time spent together, we got to know a little bit more about each other, sometimes realizing each other's flaws, yet sometimes discovering the beauty among the imperfections that lie within everyone's soul.

Of course, two years of the IB Diploma have not been without challenges. Term 1 in Year 13 has been one of the most exhausting periods of my life. However, we were never alone throughout the entire process. Each of us has been supported in some way by someone and when we stayed up on the night of EE, TOK, or IA submissions, we stayed up together. We are all in this together, and the impermanence of time will not overshadow the fact that we have bonded and built up a community during our temporary 2-years stay at the school.

I am always grateful for some of the most genuine friendships I have had being here, both in the school and in the hostel and I believe that with some, we have built up an unprecedented level of trust among each other. It's definitely a powerful moment realizing that two years ago, we came to SJIIM as a lone figure, and now we are going to leave knowing that we have belonged to this community.

Being the founding IB Diploma cohort of the school, together we have been through the first day of school, the first music concert, the first Challenge Week, the first 12 Hour Run, the first IBDP final exam - the list goes on and on and today, our very first graduation which paradoxically, is the last of all firsts. There are definitely people whom we have been extremely close to throughout these two years, and there are those whom we hope we could be closer to. In any case, this is the end.

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Nonetheless, farewell is an inevitable part of growth and I believe today's departure heralds the birth of new beginnings in the next chapters of our lives. I hope that while we strive for success, we allow time for ourselves to care about the last, the lost and the least. A great thank you to everyone who has been part of my two years at SJIIM, all the best and goodbye!
