

Good morning everybody, this fine day, I would like to welcome all of you to a very special event that happens once in a lifetime: middle school graduation. *Ahem* --straightens tie and suit -- When I'm a freshman in high school next year I'm not going to say, "Oh, graduation last year was cool, I think I'll go back to 8th grade again." We go out there, stand up to our challenges, and face the world. The first thing I would like to do is look back at the time when I was eight years old in fourth grade. I had just made a difficult decision--choosing to pursue a path in ice skating after quitting soccer, a sport I had loved for five years. I am twelve years old now, in eighth grade in all of my subjects except math, where I finished Algebra II.

This is my personal life story: My home was in northern California, where I happily grew up and slapped my sister's butt and was told by a smart-alecky classmate in preschool that "duh" was a swear word. But at some point, most elite skaters have to relocate, due to different reasons. My mom helped me find a world-class coach in southern California, and she was, and still is, amazing. All of the sacrifices and commitment have paid off. I am a three-time national champion, setting records for highest score and youngest ever. And all of you can do the same. The body achieves what the mind believes. When there's a will, there's a way. Just remember that, work hard, achieve more, and your

greatest dreams may become greatest reality, With the start of my “real” skating career, another skater's mom's recommendation to join Connections Academy sounded like a solution to the problems I had when training here while taking time off from regular school. With the promise of learning anytime, anywhere there's Internet connection, I came here to Connections Academy.

Hard work and my parents' and teachers' dedication and support have allowed me to be successful in both my academic and athletic pathways. All of you can do the same. Your parents and teachers care about you just as much as my parents and my teachers care about me. What's gotta go in is yourself. And, of course, I'd like to congratulate all of my fellow graduates on their hard work and outstanding achievements. We have all worked hard, we have all strived to learn more and achieve more. And apart from that, we must thank everybody who contributed to our success. Recognize their assistance. Give yourselves a pat on the back, send a message or two of thanks to your teachers, and give your parents and/or siblings a hug. So I would like to give my huge thanks to:

The first Connections Academy teacher I knew, Mrs. Carbajal, who introduced me to a great class of fifth graders,

My homeroom teacher Mrs. Curtis,

My advisory teacher Mrs. Morris,
My educational technology and online learning
teacher Mr. Warstler,
My language arts and literature study teachers Mrs.
Reardon, Mr. Green the library of information, and
Mrs. Vergel de Dios,
My science teachers Mrs. Nakamura the ecstatic rock
lover, Mrs. McEwan-Kliman, and Mrs. Hosseini,
My Health and PE teacher Mrs. Callahan,
My math teachers Mr. Bakhos the funniest teacher
ever, Mrs. Le the awesome superwoman, and Mrs.
Tersigni my faithful informative Algebra II teacher,
and last but waaaay not least my social studies
teachers Mr. Kahlie the skating fan, Mrs. Kruper, and
Mr. Fisher with his class of History Nerds.

I'd also like to thank all of you students out there
keeping me company and encouraging me to
continue learning with you guys. And a big thank you
to my extraordinary mother, my dad, who is our
financial backbone, and Vivian, my older sister who is
always ready to encourage me on some more while
being just as successful as me in academic and
athletic pathways. Without all of you, students,
teachers, CapoCA administration and staff, mom,
dad, Vivian, and to all of my coaches and friends in
figure skating, I would be nothing, I repeat nothing,
without you all. Tammy Gambill, my dedicated,
focused, whole-package coach who has brought me
so far, is perhaps the most important influence on me

outside of school and daily life. She is not just about skating, but is all about my life, too. She is a truly remarkable coach.

Kelly Clarkson speaks boldly in her song "Stronger", which was a favorite of mine for about 13.46% of last year, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger/stand a little taller" and later, "What doesn't kill you makes a fighter/footsteps even lighter". P!nk, in her song "Try", says, "When there is desire there is gonna be a flame/when there is a flame someone's bound to get burned/But just because it burns doesn't mean you'll die/You gotta get up and try, try, try". That is completely true, and I want to say enjoy this moment, bask in your glory, enjoy the praise, take in the feeling of accomplishment, reaching that peak of success. Of course, we've all had our mistakes, but we learn from our mistakes. Confucius say: --holds index finger up-- Smart man learn from his own mistakes. Wise man learn from others' mistakes. Thomas Alva Edison dropped out of school at a young age; his teacher called him "addled" and "retarded". Well, look what he went on to accomplish! Anybody has the potential to be great. But the truly great ones put their potential to work. They work their socks off and get to put their socks back on when the results of their hard work pays off. No pain, no gain. I once went to Panda Express, ate dinner, and came back with a fortune that read, "It is the hope and dreams we have that makes us great." Another time I

came back with a fortune that read, “You will never be a failure until you are satisfied with being one.”

Again, I would like to thank everybody here for attending, thank everybody contributing to this moment, and use all of the valuable skill and knowledge picked up this year to my benefit. And from now on, I and my fellow graduating class of 2013 would like to thank you and move on to the next mountain to climb. And remember, Class of 2013, we da best!