

Class of 2010 Valedictorian Speech

Andrew Kantor

Good Afternoon. Each day of first grade at the Academy, I uttered the same four words to the teacher, "I'm not doing that." Every time, the teacher, Mrs. Coxon, gave the same response: "Andrew, you can do it now, or you can do it later. Not doing it isn't one of the options." Though shocking as it might be to some of you, I needed this stern reinforcement. I wasn't mean; I was just contrary. I did what I wanted to do whenever I wanted to do it. In grades two through four, my teachers were patient with me, realizing that I had potential far beyond the current effort I was showing in school. Then, in fifth grade, the turnaround came. I worked hard, listened to my teachers, and got good grades in school.

The key to this turnaround was participation. I realized that the value of my education was far greater if I participated in class and dedicated the time necessary outside of school to my studies. Whether seeing Mr. Stewart jump on his desk to explain the Civil War or watching Mrs. Innerst dart around the room to explain factoring, my classmates and I became more engaged in all our classes. Not only were we learning more, but we also had a more genuine appreciation for what we were studying.

But even more important than participation in the classroom was involvement in activities outside of class. Throughout high school, everyone in this year's senior class became increasingly more involved in Harrisburg Academy extracurricular activities. Some played soccer and tennis; others played music or danced. Some participated in Model UN or Quiz Bowl; others wrote articles in the Academy Insider or took pictures for the School Yearbook. With the diversity of activities offered at the Academy, everyone could find a way to show their talents, goals, and dreams.

This involvement helped to shape the people we are today. With each class we took, sport we played, instrument we tried, or club we joined, we became closer to finding what we are truly passionate about. Everyone in this year's senior class excels at something that they can take with them in the future, and these interests are only going to become stronger in the years to come.

We must pursue these goals and dreams wholeheartedly. Now is not the time to sit back and watch our opportunities pass by. We must not wait for these opportunities to come to us; on the contrary, we must pursue

Challenging our students in an environment that nurtures and inspires.

our goals and dreams and create our own opportunities. Through this constant pursuit, we will find success.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to everyone here: family, friends, faculty, and administration, because we would not have found success without you. You guided and inspired us and provided us with the tools that we need to reach our full potential.

I will not speak for the class, but I know that my goals have undoubtedly changed since kindergarten. In Mrs. Mahaffey's kindergarten class, we did a "New Year's Promises" project, and my goals included:

- At school, I will try to pay attention.
- At home, I will try to listen to my mom.
- At school, I will try not to bring toys to the table.
- At home, I will try not to kick my sister.

Well, I accomplished these goals. I made it, and so did everyone else sitting on the risers. Our class is honored to have become a part of the 225 years of history of the Academy. We learned from the past, enjoy the present, and look forward to what lies ahead. We all have a bright future ahead of us in college, where we will be able to realize our dreams and goals and make them a reality. Here's to only the beginning for the Harrisburg Academy Class of 2010.