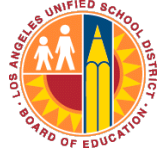




Verdugo Hills High School Commencement Address
May 24, 2012
Verdugo Hills High School
Tujunga, California
Dr. Edward Trimis, Principal



Welcome colleagues, friends, community members, invited guests, parents, families, and students. And congratulations, Verdugo Hills High School, Kings and Queens, The Class of 2012!

It's been an amazing year. A year I will always remember. This will always be a special group of students for me because they are my first class of graduating students at Verdugo.

I remember my first football game when we played Franklin High School, and yes, we won the game. I remember all of the other games and events-football, water polo and our final game at Palisades, the Dig Pink Girls Volleyball Game, the amazing boys and girls soccer seasons, seeing Nancy and Corina at our final girls basketball game at El Camino High School, seeing Miko run at my first track meet, enjoying seeing CJ, Sevada, and our perfect boys volleyball team winning game after game, the softball games, especially when we played Poly, seeing our swimmers compete in San Fernando, and even running up to give a high-five to Alex in the LA Marathon at Mile 17. And then, of course, seeing our baseball team win their play-off game to progress to Round 2 in the post-season. And much, much more. It's just been an awesome year for sports.

But our sports program is just the start of what we are and what we do at Verdugo. We are athletes, artists, and scholars. And many of you are all three. When I think of our senior class, I think of the many, many other seniors who have just been so wonderful to work with.

I think of Sarah B. and what an amazing singer she is. I think of Chelsie, Kyle, Conner, Jared, Diana, Justin, Sarah K., Malina, Dianna, and the many other stars who pulled off a full-on, professionally produced musical in South Pacific. I think of the many marching band competitions, and, especially seeing Giovanni and Cynthia with the band and color guard winning the LAUSD competition in December. I think of our amazing Cheer Team, the many competitions, and going to see *Bring it On*.

I think of the concerts, recitals, elementary school performances, Danielle and Rachel and Glee Club singing telegrams. I think of our JROTC program and seeing them at the district competition, eventually earning 1st place overall in Academic Achievement out of all of the competing schools in the district. I think of our wonderful ACADECA Team in the Super Quiz at Roybal, our Leadership Class, and all the clubs. I think of April and the many students involved with Relay for Life and what an amazing event that was. I think of our art students on Llama Day, our Damon Marks Rock Concert, seeing Brooke as Ms.

Claus and Gift Giving Scooters at Stonehurst, seeing all the leadership students as Dr. Seuss characters and playing with the Plainview students on Dr. Seuss day (plus Snow Day).

I think of our artists and the Trashion Shows, Corrina and everyone in the Asian Pageant, Jared and Comedy Sportz, the All City JROTC Ball, Jessica, Anthony, Tori, Brooke and Cassidy in the Talent Show, Verdugo Day, Homecoming, Alex and our awesome Prom, complete with Eifel Tower, Seeing Kyle and other students rush off to Plainview to tutor students there, Senior Movie Night, Grad Night, our AppNormal Technovation Team coached by Dr. Van Baal, my talks about the meaning of life and the future with Josh and talking about composing with Kyle, and so much more! And, at last, I will think of today. This moment, right now, when we celebrate our graduates and look toward their futures.

When you start looking at the accomplishments of our seniors, you will find that sports, the arts, and activities, are really just the beginning. I've seen how our students shine in the classroom. I've participated in Coach Wallace's AP Physics class, sat in Mr. Kemple's AP Calculus class, and listened in on Mr. Mendelsohn's AP English class. I've been in Mr. Reinhart's AP Government and Mr. Mccary's AP US History classes and the non-AP classes are just as impressive. In every class I've seen such a high level of involvement, such rigor, and thoughtful discussion, you sometimes forget these are high school students.

This class has an impressive resume of academic achievement with success in the advanced placement program, 21 valedictorians, thousands of dollars in scholarships and acceptances in all the major universities, schools, and programs from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and many other UCs and Cal States, to all the local community colleges, many private schools like Art Center, Pasadena, Art institute, Hollywood, acceptance into all branches of military service, just to list a few!

And now I have a few specific recommendations for our seniors.

Graduation is a time of transition and decision. What will you do? What are your plans? Where does your compass lead you? The time is now. The future is here.

I have three recommendations for you. 1. Make a Difference. 2. Have Faith. 3. Realize your impact on others and make it count.

1. Make a Difference

Edward Everett Little once said, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."

We learn from Ghandi that "you must be the change you want to see in the world."

And President Barack Obama teaches us "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

Robert F. Kennedy talked about how important it is for us the stand up when it counts.

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope... and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Make a difference. It's important for all of us and for our future. If you can believe it, you can achieve it. Si! Se puede. Nobody can do everything, but EVERYONE can do something.

2. Have Faith.

We learn from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase."

"Beginnings are usually scary and endings are usually sad, but it's everything in between that makes it all worth living." - Sandra Bullock

You cannot always wait for the perfect time, sometimes you just have to dare to jump."
-unknown

Have faith. Jump in. It matters.

3. Realize your impact on others

Everything you do, everything you say, every act you take, makes an impact on someone or something. This forms the tapestry of our lives.

You've made an impact on each other, your teachers, your counselors, your parents, and me in ways you may not even realize.

From Wicked:

It well may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime.

So let me say before we part so much of me is made of what I learned from you. You'll be with me like a handprint on my heart.

And now whatever way our stories end, I know you have re-written mine by being my friend:

Like a ship blown from its mooring by a wind off the sea,
Like a seed dropped by a skybird in a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
I do believe I have been changed for the better.

And because I knew you, because I knew you,
I have been changed for good.

And, to close, a last wish for you from one of my favorite songs...

I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance
I hope you dance.

Class of 2012. It's time. It is YOUR turn!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you!