GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone!! It feels good to be “home” and I mean back at Poly High School to witness the graduation of the class of 2012!! I spent the last 15 years of my career here at Poly, and although I have moved on to accept new responsibilities in my career, this graduating class is like my family. Imagine being something of a father figure and a mentor-or at least I would hope that is how think of me, to **700 people** who are about to begin their adult journey in life!! I am so proud of all of you, my “school family, and I would not have missed witnessing your big day for the world! To all of the parents, family and friends of this year’s graduates I would like to extend heartfelt and enthusiastic congratulations. To the administration, staff and faculty, it’s great to see all of you again, and thank you all for your demonstrated commitment and contribution to these students who are about to inherit the future.

Now I want to speak to all of you who are graduating today. I want you to know how proud I am of each one of you. I want you to know that I am inspired by your accomplishments, both individually and collectively (**If you want, name one or two students who demonstrated major achievements**). I’d like to mention \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for his outstanding achievement in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for her inspirational work in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. These are just a couple of examples of how your peers have succeeded in their high school careers, but they are both a part of a team, and so are **YOU.** I have had the privilege of being the principal at Poly for the entire time each one of you has been a student, and I have been inspired by your willingness to learn, grow, and open your minds to new ideas. I want each one of you to know that **I know** what it takes for you to “bring it” when it comes to schoolwork. There are a million other things you’d rather be doing -or may have to do, but you also realize how important it is to have an education in order to find your way in this world.

Today marks the end of your high school career and tomorrow is the beginning of your adult life. People may have underestimated your potential, but you have shown you can set goals and achieve them. High school helped for you to build a foundation. Now it is up to you to continue your hard work in order to succeed in life. Now is the time for you to learn to push yourselves enough that you continue to grow as a human being. Each one of us faces challenges that can stand in the way of our personal success, and each one of us has to really believe in who we are and what we are doing. Have the courage to ask for what you need in order to succeed, and find the self-confidence within you to really work to attain your goals. Don’t think that everyone else “has his or her stuff “together.” They don’t. There are many people in history who have made great contributions to society and we just think they hit the jackpot and didn’t have to work for it. **NOT TRUE**. How many of you know who Thomas Alva Edison is? We all should know him-he seemed like a pretty successful guy. Without his contributions and inventions, we wouldn’t have recorded music! We wouldn’t have movies!!! We’d all be sitting in the dark-he also invented the light bulb!! But how many of us know that Edison only had about 3 months of formal education in school? He was kicked out because his teachers thought he was “stupid.” He actually was almost deaf from a childhood illness and he had learning disabilities and trouble concentrating-there was a lot going on in his brain-even at a young age!! He had to be home schooled-and not by choice, but he had a thirst for knowledge and science and he changed the world **in spite of his challenges**. Without Edison, where would we be? Where would Steve Jobs be? Where would Jay Z be? (**Or name other entertainers the grads can relate to**). Someone once said that success is getting up one more time than you fall. All you have to do as you are challenged in life is **remember to get up**, brush yourself off, **have faith in yourself** and continue. Albert Einstein was considered one of the most brilliant people of his time. Here is what he very simply said about persistence. He said, “It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s that I just stay with problems longer.” The longer you stay with problems in order to solve them, I’ll bet that the better the solutions are that you find!

In closing, I want you all to know again that I am very proud of you and it is now your turn to make your positive mark in this world. There are now young people who will look up to **YOU** for guidance. Remember how much you valued someone watching over you. Now it’s **YOUR TURN** to make a difference and set a good example. Remember to believe in yourselves. Remember the value of hard work. Remember at all times that someone is watching you and trying to learn from you, so they may as well admire you!!! Do your best to approach life with a positive outlook. And lastly, in the words of “unknown,” remember, “Smile. It makes people wonder what you’re thinking.”

Congratulations and I look forward to hearing all about how your persistence, hard work, and self-confidence will bring each one of you all the success you can wish for!