AWARDS CEREMONY SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone. It's great to see all of you here tonight and I am especially thrilled to see those of you who have won awards. Achievement is a great motivator and we all respond to an encouraging acknowledgement. I am sure I speak for all of the parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators when I extend my most sincere congratulations. It took hard work to attain this goal. Guess what?  This is just the beginning!!  The motivational speaker, Les Brown has said, "Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is YOU who will get you where you want to go, no one else."  Think about the process you just went through to win the awards you received tonight. Think about when you first heard of the opportunity to “go for it.” Think about the temptation to participate, the lure of the challenge, the doubts you might have felt midway through, the feeling that no matter what, you were determined to succeed, and then think about tonight. Life is a series of tests and trials and no one but **YOU** will get you where you want to go in life. You are responsible for all that you experience, and learning to achieve through an awards based process like the challenges you faced, are an example of how one can seize an opportunity and make the best of a challenge.

Tonight we are celebrating your achievements. You’ve done great jobs and have received distinguished recognition. Consider this whole experience as a dress rehearsal for life…just remember that although this was technically an academic assignment, the entire process you experienced provides training for and insight to show how to handle life’s challenges. As young adults, you are being groomed to inherit the **real** responsibilities in life. You have succeeded in this task. Congratulations once again.

We go to school to learn the fundamental skills and information required to lead a worthwhile and responsible adult life. We go to school to **learn how to learn**. The learning does not stop there! Life is about setting goals, learning lessons, being responsible for absorbing the lessons learned, and going on to inspire and teach others. The English poet Robert Browning teaches us, “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp.” Think of life as a continuous climb up a thick braided rope. As one hand reaches for what seems to be the impossible distance-you would really not move if your first action were not a stretch, the other gives strength to pull oneself just a little farther…up the rope and on with life. Life’s lessons are somewhat “gravity defying,” just like the climb up that rope, but as you live your life, setting your goals to stretch your experience, once you get to the top of the expanse of heavy twine or cord, the perspective is new and unique. Take a look from where you’ve come. Acknowledge what you’ve learned. Move on to the next challenge. Although it’s tempting to think you’ve “arrived,” try not to settle for complacency. Also as you continue through life, you will learn to play in progressively larger arenas. The rope will get longer. You will be plucked from your comfort zones. You’ll meet new contemporaries who are equally or more accomplished than you. Keep with you the accolades you receive today and use that feeling of triumph to inspire and inform the way you will face life’s real challenges. Honor the accomplishments of others. Someone once said, “The best way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people who are smarter than I am.” Remember that and keep that thought with you. Even the smartest person in this room isn’t the smartest person on earth. We all have something to learn. In the words of a wise old friend, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” But we’re here on earth to learn and to be responsible for all of our experiences in life.

Have some fun tonight. Celebrate your achievements with your friends and family and classmates, because tomorrow…. The **REAL** work begins!! And as you go on to achieve “bigger and better,” take these words from Dr. Seuss with you as well. From his wonderful book, **Oh, The Places You’ll Go**, here’s my gift to each one of you… and everyone in this room- “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And **YOU** are the one who'll decide where to go...” May you all have wonderful and enlightening journeys and accomplishments throughout life! Congratulations and thank you!