**PERSUASIVE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JOSEPHINE BECHTEL**

Hello everyone!! To family and friends, colleagues and fellow students, faculty, administrators, and distinguished guests, it’s great to be back here, in Luzon!!! I’d like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me to speak with you today. To my classmates who have know me since.... **waaaaaaaayy** back when, we’ve all lived a couple of lifetimes and crossed many bridges, and whether we literally travelled miles or minutes since we attended the A. Diaz Sr. School together, there is something that is true for all of us... we are each others’ **roots**. We were there for each other back then... and to see so many of you, and to have been asked to speak to all of you... what can I say??? I’m humbled... my heart is full... and I am so thankful to reconnect with memories and mentors and the people who played such an important part in forming the person I became. That we have the power and ability to reconnect like this really inspires gratitude within me.... we may grow older on the outside, but seeing all of you sparks the light of my youth... I’m sure you feel it too!!

... And speaking of gratitude, I want to acknowledge and thank our Principal, Mr. Julius Quinto, for being a great mentor and a truly involved, encouraging, supportive teacher. It is because of people like Mr. Quinto that any of us has any kind of chance in life. When we were kids, we may not have fully appreciated the commitment that this man made in the name of our development and success. It was only as I grew up, got older, and began to really live the lessons we learned, that I realized how lucky we all were to have had such a caring, dedicated influence in our lives... and the only way we can fully appreciate that gift is when it’s gone... when we move beyond from our schooling... when we have the gift of perspective.... when we have to find our own strengths and learn to stand on our own two feet... that’s when we learn just how strong we’ve been built!!

**Thirty eight years.**... relatively speaking, it’s a **LONG TIME**... but as I look out at all of you, so much comes back to me in a flash... I’m taken back to those days of our youth... to the times when we learned together, played together... got into a little **mischief** together... not necessarily in that order!! (**Wait for the laugh**) and I’m reminded of two expressions that I’ve heard over the years....”Give me the child when he or she is seven years old (**or change to the age you were when you attended school**) and I will show you the man... or woman.” All these years later, I remember... the child Josephine, sitting in (**Name your teacher**) Ms. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ first grade class. I was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years old at the time. That was the year I learned to read and write English. In second grade, Mrs.Solomon **REALLY** believed in me. She encouraged me to keep reading... stay interested... always be curious... and never give up... she made me feel special... which is something I clearly needed to know. I am the oldest of six children. My parents were humble working people... neither had a college education. Mrs Solomon went out of her way to talk to my dad on her days off... to encourage me to keep at it... to learn... By fifth grade, thanks to the efforts and extra conversation of everyone involved, I mastered that language... (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**)... and I’m sure you can see now that I remembered what I learned!! That’s **REALLY** good teaching !!! (**And wait for the laugh**). It was also in fifth grade that Mr. Toledo coached me to be a quiz bee champion...I saw what a difference study and practice made in life. I got a glimpse of what life looked like when **excellence** was involved... and I knew I wanted to excel. By sixth grade, I graduated as our class valedictorian. What I learned way back then was perseverance, respect, and the importance of strong foundations and a good education.

The other expression that has continued to pop into my head since I receive the invitation to speak with all of you is this: “I am part of all that I have met.” **THIRTY EIGHT YEARS** and we are **STILL** a part of each others’ lives!!! I moved to the United States thirty five years ago. Returning to Luzon has been so reaffirming for me... this experience has truly shown me the importance of unity and collaboration... we may have been separated by thousands of miles and decades of time, but like I said earlier.... in no small way... we are home to each other. We have a connection that defies time and distance. It’s like we all know each other’s innermost self. We were **THERE** when each of us was formed. We know the “secret sauce” that makes each one of us unique... and we’ve taken the lessons and legends of the A Diaz Sr School with us.... and whether it was to the next town or across oceans, no one will ever take our combined, connected history from us.

Since I left Luzon all those years ago, I took my lessons and memories with me... I’ve been a registered nurse for the past twenty years. I’m currently a certified clinical documentation specialist and I’ve managed an entire department for my company for the past five years.

I think it’s safe to say that both unity and collaboration play huge roles in forming us as children and maintaining us as adults. No one does anything worthwhile alone. I am so thankful to have reconnected with all of you and to have these few moments to go back in time and remember.... it is when we have a chance to look back that we can see how far we’ve progressed... and I mean it sincerely when I say, I would not be who I am today without all of you and the A Diaz Sr.School!! Thank you all!!