

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

GRADUATION -- JUNE 1, 1996

Acceptance of the Class of 1996

by
Stephanie Pace Marshall, Ph.D.

Thank you, and good morning.

I want to add my words of welcome to those of Dr. Lederman, and say how appreciative we all are to see so many of you here today to honor the Class of 1996.

In listening to Dr. Lederman, I hope you realize how unique a place IMSA really is. It's not every institution that has a spare Nobel Laureate around to pinch hit for its Board President.

Like the seven classes before it, the Class of 1996, has helped to shape the Academy's history.

In 1993, when this class enrolled as sophomores, the Academy was at a significant turning point. With a new mission and commitment to transform mathematics and science teaching and learning through connections--we embarked on our own journey of transformation.

The Academy's identity began to shift, from that of a "high school" to that of an "educational laboratory" with more focused responsibilities in teaching and learning, research and service throughout the state of Illinois.

The stakes were raised, but so were the opportunities, and with a renewed sense of purpose, the IMSA community accepted the challenge and moved forward.

Members of the Class of 1996, participated in and greatly informed the work of IMSA the educational laboratory, and together we made great progress in our efforts to develop curricular programs and teaching strategies that foster interconnections and integrative ways of knowing, and that serve other students and teachers across our state.

Many students also became active participants in the faculty's plans of inquiry.

This senior class also benefited greatly from new and expanded resources and programs made possible by increased state and private-sector support-resources such as the Digital Authoring and Training Laboratory, the Integrated Science Laboratory, the Foreign Language Laboratory, the Grainger Inventors' Workshop, and the Collaborative Visualization Project.

Members of the Class of 1996, have distinguished themselves in many ways--with numerous academic awards, only some of which Dr. Lederman cited, with admission to the finest schools in Illinois and the nation, and with literally millions of dollars worth of scholarships. It might interest you to know that over 44% of these students will be attending Illinois Colleges or Universities, with over 1/3 attending the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago and Northwestern University.

But just as important, this class has demonstrated the ethical leadership and the perseverance of character that we believe will have profound impact on the quality of life for others in our world.

Their academic and intellectual achievements have been impressive, but equally as important these seniors contributed more than **14,000** hours of **community** service to the citizens of Illinois --by serving as volunteers in hospitals, senior citizen and child-care facilities, schools, libraries, and museums--and six members of the class contributed in excess of 300 hours each.

Every class distinguishes itself in some way. Dr. Lederman cited the academic achievements of our seniors- there were many first and second place recognition's, and we are very proud of these achievements. But there are other accomplishments of the class of 1996 equally worthy of distinction. These young people:

- Established and prototyped the award-winning interactive CD-ROM, Real Science Magazine for students in grade's 3-5. This was the first time IMSA students conceived, designed, developed, produced and distributed a product for students and teachers across sciences.
- Provided leadership for important programming such as Holocaust Memorial Week and the HIV/AIDS Awareness Week.
- Strengthened our appreciation of the diversity of our community, through the work of Peer Multicultural Educators and others.
- Provided leadership in planning and implementing IMSA's first intersession

- Contributed significant ideas, time, talents and energies to helping insure IMSA's long-term sustainability through participation in the Reinventing IMSA process, the strategic planning process and for the first, through service as a liaison member of the Board of Trustees.

AND

- They helped advance the important work of the 1st in the World Consortium and the U.S. Department of Education by taking the Third International Mathematics and Science Study exam, the results of which will help inform decisions about curriculum instruction, assessment, and professional development of teachers at IMSA and elsewhere in the years ahead.
- Of the High School seniors that took this exam, IMSA senior's had the highest participation level.

As their accomplishments indicate, the students in the Class of 1996, are enormously talented and capable young people; but they also are caring and thoughtful human beings; respectful of each other and this special place we call IMSA.

And this is illustrated by the Senior class gift to IMSA which is the establishment of a scholarship to help defray fees for students and families in need.

Like their predecessors, they too have been pioneers, helping to shape the commitments, spirit and ethos of the Academy, and helping to advance our institution's leadership role in American education.

Carl Sagan, who is a member of the Academy's National Advisory Board, has called IMSA a gift from the people of Illinois to the human future.

But these special young people also have given us a gift—a gift of their youthful energy, enthusiasm, dedication, commitment, seriousness of purpose, and significant accomplishments—and we all have been enriched by having shared a part of their lives.

Members of the Class of 1996 have left a strong and vibrant legacy for the students who will follow in the years ahead, and for that we are all grateful.

As our newest graduates, we hope you feel we have also given you a part of us, and that, in the end, you have received much more than a diploma.

We hope you feel that your capacity for problem-finding and solving, and creativity has been nurtured;

- That your ability to see and create connections within and among mathematics, science, the arts and the humanities has been enhanced;
- That your leadership potential and ethical perspective have been developed and focused;

AND

- That your appreciation for the interconnectedness of the natural world or which we are all a part, has been increased.

And, we hope you have grown to appreciate more than ever, your individual and collective responsibility and capacity to give back and to become stewards of the world's resources.

Your remarkable opportunity to make the World a better place is best described for me in the words of Robert Fulghum, in his book *Maybe (Maybe Not)*

ACCEPT UNCERTAINTY AS A BLESSING

Life is, I am Anything might happen.

And I believe I may invest my life with meaning.

The uncertainty is a blessing in disguise.

If I were absolutely certain about all things, I would spend my life in anxious misery, fearful of losing my way. But since everything and anything are always possible, the miraculous is always nearby and wonders shall never, ever cease.

--ROBERT FULGHUM
in *Maybe (Maybe Not)*

On this day of national recommitment to our nations children, it is fitting that we are here to celebrate the achievements of these children and to give them our blessings for the lives of service, we know they will lead.

On behalf of Dr. Lederman, Mr. Pearson, and the Board of Trustees, and with the gratitude of the entire Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy staff, your families and friends who are here today, and our shareholders throughout the State of Illinois; I accept the members of the Class of 1996, and bestow upon them the diploma and commencement medallion of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.

Congratulations, and Godspeed.