

2022 Convocation Remarks - Evan Glazer

Welcome back, IMSA. My name is Evan Glazer, president of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. It is so wonderful to see all of you, looking sharp, and setting a positive tone for the year ahead.

I've missed you during the summer months and hope they were restful and now you feel inspired to try something new with your creative and innovative spirit. Community health is looking good, so there are fewer COVID-related restrictions that I'm sure you'll appreciate as you get to know each other as good friends. Please continue to be respectful to those who wear a mask and those who observe greater physical separation as we are still in a pandemic. Also, thank you for participating in weekly COVID testing and keeping up with your vaccination boosters in interest of community health.

I'm so excited to welcome you to our first day at Convocation. I want to reiterate Ms. Berger's remarks about having a special school year and helping our new Titans in the Class of 2025 feel at

home. You've all made a decision to come to IMSA, and I thank you for your interest and commitment as students and as future leaders who carry the responsibility of advancing the human condition. When you enter the IMSA main building, the United Nations Sustainable Development goals posted to the walls remind us of the importance of your education, and the important role you will play towards to end poverty, reduce inequalities, protect the planet, and ensure that by all people enjoy peace and prosperity. At IMSA, we are devoted to changing the trajectory of teaching, learning and life experiences so you are equipped to make a difference.

I want to recognize two important public officials in the audience who contribute a great deal to IMSA:

Illinois State Senator Karina Villa from the 25th district, where 41 IMSA students reside

Illinois Representative Barbara Hernandez from the 83rd District, where 17 IMSA students reside

These leaders advocate for IMSA to obtain adequate support so we can continue to innovate in the future. I am extremely grateful for their leadership, service and commitment to support this institution we so dearly love.

Also with us today, we have a whole section of distinguished guests here to celebrate with us. Among them are friends who have contributed so much to make IMSA what it is today, including former faculty and staff, and community members who believe in what IMSA can do for our future. Among them, I would like to recognize IMSA's founding president and President Emerita, Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall.

To our students, I know IMSA can be both invigorating and exhausting. It's invigorating because of the unique courses, projects, diverse people, residential life experiences and great cultural events, to name a few examples. It can be exhausting when it feels there is too much on your plate and you can't keep up, you bite off more than

you can chew, or you feel down because you're not progressing in the way you'd expect.

As we head into this academic year, my key piece of advice is: *When you're stuck in honey, find a honey badger.*

If you have never seen one before, they are about the size of a skunk, however much more fierce when they encounter a threat. If you are a venomous snake, the honey badger will make you wish you had armor. If a lion comes near, the honey badger will make them meow like a kitten.

Now, I don't want you to think that when the going gets tough, you defend yourself mercilessly. Instead, if you start feeling like an academic zombie, you must realize there are different pathways to help you get unstuck. The honey badger believes nothing will threaten her survival, and a proactive response is needed to protect her welfare.

Also, the honey badger is given its name because it **LOVES** honey. It's a friend that will stay close and

help you resolve a sticky situation by offering an approach that maybe you haven't thought of before.

2600 years ago, Aesop wrote a fable about maneuvering around sticky situations, titled the Crow and the Pitcher:

In a spell of dry weather, when the Birds could find very little to drink, a thirsty Crow found a pitcher with a little water in it. But the pitcher was high and had a narrow neck, and no matter how he tried, the Crow could not reach the water. The poor thing felt as if he must die of thirst.

Then an idea came to him. Picking up some small pebbles, he dropped them into the pitcher one by one. With each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it was near enough so he could drink.

The key is there is always another path, even during the most challenging times, and those new pathways will help you become clearer about your needs and empower you to lead your learning. The only part of the crow story I would change is we all need a good friend when we're stuck so you don't

have to worry alone. You don't need to think of solutions on your own. Our interest for you at IMSA is to feel ignited with your work, doing something here that wouldn't be possible elsewhere, and inspire your future direction well beyond IMSA.

With this in mind, I wish you a wonderful launch to the school year. I look forward to getting to know you more, learning more about what IMSA means to you and the aspirations you have to make the academy a better place for learning and growing. And don't forget, if you get stuck in honey, find your honey badger, and if you don't have one yet, on behalf of the faculty and staff, we're here for you. Thank you.