Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I’d like to start off by thanking the teachers here for giving me the knowledge and resources needed to obtain this title of valedictorian. I’d also like to thank the administration for giving me the opportunity to stand in front of you all. Lastly, thank you to my friends and family who are sitting out in the audience today. Each of you has played an influential role in my life, and I am extremely grateful for my parent’s constant guidance, love, and support. Simply put, I wouldn’t be here without you.

Here at TSA we’ve grown in character through a variety of lessons. Starting our Freshman year Mr. Thomas taught us how to construct the perfect peanut butter pie, which must be a teaching standard for physical science. Later, in our Senior year Mr. Moyer helped prepare us through the construction of Canopic jars for our organs when we pass. And no one can deny that the dreadful stairs have prepared us to climb any mountain that gets in the way of our dreams. Overall, High school has been a unique and special 4 years. We’ve been provided with a good education in a unique environment with no limitations on creativity. Although we’ve been expected to read the same books and memorize the same math formulas, teachers have allowed us to go about learning in different ways. We’ve been encouraged to mesh our artistic abilities with our academic learning. Likewise, I’ve watched many of you dance in the halls and draw in class. I believe one of the greatest things we’ve learned is how to express ourselves through our artistic abilities. And most importantly we understand the importance of every individual. We’ve learned that the differences in individuals do not make them strange, instead their unique qualities make them talented and useful.

As I look out into the audience at you guys, I can’t help but be thankful for each of you. You aren’t just a bunch of faces. You are people with names, majors, and secret talents I know. This goes to show how close we all are. I am so proud of the performances and art exhibits the class of 2015 has been a part of making spectacular. Recently, I saw many of your Cultural Identity presentations. These presentations comforted me and made me realize there are about 80 talented people graduating today that have the ability to be successful and impactful. we’ve created so many memories together in class, at gigs, performances, and random get togethers on the weekend. I’ll never forget the lunch table conversations pertaining to anything from quizzing each other on muscle vocab, Senators, or the periodic table to discussing the less than appetizing “healthy” lunch alternatives such as the Bosco sticks. Today, some of you are ready to accept your diploma and burst out those doors immediately, while others of you are uneasy about what lies ahead and fear leaving the safety and familiarity of high school. No matter where you lie on the spectrum I encourage you to be thankful and realize because of your time at TSA you are more than capable of leaving the comfortable, familiarity of high school behind and tackling the uncertain but promising future that lies ahead. Each of your futures has the potential to be extraordinary if you accept challenges and push yourselves. “To be successful you must accept challenges that come your way. You can’t just accept the ones you like,’’ says Mike Gafka.

I truly believe the amount of hard work you put into something correlates to your success. For instance, I am not a natural genius, but I am a hard worker. That is what got me here today. No one is born a Rocket Scientist, Instead they work to become one. This should comfort and remind you that you truly can be anything you want, if you are willing to work for it. You are in control of your success and do not let the circumstances imposed upon you keep you from reaching your full potential.

In the coming years, the obstacles you will encounter can either cripple you or motivate you. This is entirely your choice. I challenge you to remind yourself that although you can’t control what happens to you, you can control how you react. I encourage you to react with optimism and determination. Aristotle once said, “Happiness depends upon ourselves.” Simply put life is what you make of it, so make it extraordinary and do not let anything prevent you from reaching your full potential and being happy. For those of you who fear the uncertainty of the future I leave you with the wise words of Abraham Lincoln. He said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” You are all capable of creating a spectacular future, for I’ve experienced the amazing works created by the class of 2015. Your success story doesn’t end here. Keep creating and your futures will be bright. Thank you.