

Valedictorian: Esmeralda



Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to Girls Prep's 2017 graduation. I have attended Girls Prep since 1st Grade, in 2009, as I know many of us students here have as well. This year is very special because this is the first graduating class for Girls Prep Bronx Middle School, so let's hear it for the Bronx! *(pause of applause)*

My fellow graduates, over the last seven years more or less as Girls Prep students, we have built a sisterhood with our peers; and just like with real siblings, we may sometimes argue or not even stand the sight of one another, but the bond that we have created will not be so easily broken because in the end sisterhood is more than a core values to us. It is a lifestyle choice. We will continue to choose to make decisions that will break through stereotypes and elevate us to what we want to do, and not let others influence our goals for the bad.

When I think back to the beginning years of being a Girls Prep student, I think about how much I have changed. When thinking about it, in elementary school, I was always "the quiet one," and I remember being *really* shy, but at the moment, we all come to the point of embracing that we are all at some point shy, whether that be speaking in front of an enormous crowd, or talking to a boy you seem to like. ;) We have to learn to live in

the moment, and that means you have to strive to your best capability, and appreciate those who you do things with, as they may be influencing you, or *you* may be influencing *them*. So some of us probably did come to the point of disliking another person, but now if you think back about it, you will most likely think that that was a waste of your time. Although, most of the people here pushed others up, when they felt they couldn't succeed. They helped support you when you felt you couldn't do it. And you want to keep friends like that close to you, who want you to reach your goals, and succeed with you.

As Girls Prep scholars, I'm sure we've all gone through many obstacles. But see? The ending isn't so bad after all. Comes to think about it, we have already made it through middle school! The year's most teens dread, but in our school community, we were able to make these years memorable, on joyful moments, not embarrassing ones. In the future, one will face rejections, and learn how to cope with them at the end of the day, as long as we remember to keep in mind that just because one door closed on our face, doesn't mean we can't open new ones. Surely, most of us are feeling edgy or tense, about High School, unsure of what is going to happen. But we can't let that block our path to success. Because before we know it, we will already be in our classes, we will already be working on projects, and we will be striving for the best. It doesn't matter what High School you are going to in the fall. What matters is the role we play in our soon-to-be new schools' community, and leave a mark of yourself there, to prove that you have, in fact, influenced everyone there.

When we leave this prestigious building, we will be graduates. We will end our time together as a cohort and after a summer of rest become a part of a new cohort of students. John Locke once said “we are like chameleons, we take our hue and the color of our moral character, from those who are around us.” So remember to choose the people you are with wisely, as they will help guide you towards being the best person you could be, and keep exploring who you are, since you only have one life, live it carefully, with the best people around you and remember to always reach for the stars, even when there are people around you who think you can't. I am Esmeralda Torres, and I *will* be future president of the United States of America!