

Good morning, seniors, families and friends, colleagues, and members of the Plainfield School District 202 school board and administration! First of all, I have to say that this is an incredible honor for me. I am absolutely overjoyed that I was invited to speak with you today on behalf of the faculty here at East. When the administration informed me that I was going to give the faculty commencement address, I made a really exciting connection. Seniors—your first year at East was my first year at East! When you were first learning to navigate the hallway outside the Media Center, figuring out who to eat lunch with, and just discovering how to balance life in general here at East, I was doing the same.

Today I want to speak with you about the **Top 10 things I wish I would have known earlier in life.** So, here we go!

**Number 10--Your moods are contagious, so share positive energy.** I teach first period, and I can totally understand that we all wake up early. But I try to set an energetic tone in my classroom. Sometimes it's the coffee, but I like to think that it has more to do with my mood. I want to radiate positivity, because I know that it's contagious. My students will have no choice but to be engaged in the lesson because of my energy. So, when you're out and about in the world, share a smile! The universe will smile back.

**Number 9--Clap for your friends! Support each other!**

Okay, so if you've been a student in my classes, or if you've had friends who have been in my classes, you probably know that one of my catchphrases is "Clap for your friends." When students have a celebration to share like getting their driver's

license, or winning a track tournament, or when they finish a presentation for class, we “clap for our friends.” It is so important to celebrate the victories of others, no matter how big or small. Furthermore—share your success with others! If something really spectacular is happening in your world, let others know!

**Number 8--Respect other people’s opinions, even when they differ from your own.** As a history major, this became crucial. Understand that there are multiple perspectives, and that is a beautiful thing. One of my favorite TEDTalks is called the “Dangers of a Single Story”. Watch it if you have a chance. Essentially, when we do not broaden our horizons to understand the viewpoints of others, we rob ourselves of a comprehensive interpretation of reality. When discussing

viewpoints with others, go into the conversation knowing that you're probably not going to change their mind. But know that you will walk away with a fuller understanding of another point of view.

### **Number 7--Most days aren't as bad as you think they are.**

I can be emotional. I tend to go from ZERO TO SIXTY, and I often think about the worst case scenario. I have to tell myself to "Calm down Chicken Little—the sky is NOT falling." I've recently learned a strategy to refocus my thoughts. I think about it like a forest. I often consider the worst-case scenario because that's the only path that I can see in front of me. Instead of feeling lost in this forest of anxiety and worry, I try to pretend that I have an aerial view instead. When looking at the situation from a birds eye view, I'm able to see all of the

other paths in the forest. Instead of dwelling on feeling trapped in the forest, I imagine all of the other paths that will free me from despair.

## **Number 6 Find your “go-to” person, or your anchor.**

Your anchor is the first person you call when you have a problem, or when you want to celebrate. Anchors keep us grounded to ensure that we’re not swept out into the ocean when the seas get rough. Graduates—look around you. The odds are that they’re here in the audience supporting you right now. It might be a parent/guardian, a sibling, or another student. Sometimes we find our anchors later in life. Me for example—I have my work anchors—shoutout to Miss Ott and Miss Ferraro--#SQUAD. They’re my go-to people at East. For life in general—it’s my dad. Hold on to your anchors, and

make sure to thank them for their support. Understand that your anchor won't always be available to talk, so it's important to also know how to self-soothe.

**Number 5--it's okay to fail. Just don't give up!** My first year after graduating college, I was unable to find a full-time teaching position. I was **HEARTBROKEN**. I substitute taught in various districts around my hometown during the day, and I filled out applications at night. I must have applied to 70 positions, and I received so many rejections. It was a very difficult time in my life. I relied on my anchor, my dad, a lot. He was always there to offer advice, or provide a shoulder for me to cry on. But, I didn't give up! I knew what I wanted to do with my life, and I continued to apply for teaching positions.

After a year of searching, I finally found a job! I'm so happy that I didn't give up on my dream.

**Number 4-- find a job that you LOVE.** I am so blessed that I wake up every morning excited to go to work. Find a job that makes you happy. Choose a career path that will allow you to find joy every day. Furthermore if you're unhappy with your job, evaluate your other options! Because moods are contagious, make sure that you're doing what you want with your life.

**Number 3-- take chances!** Ugh, this one was hard for me. I'm a creature of habit, so I have a natural aversion to change. I am not a risk-taker—I play it safe. But sometimes it's important to get out of your comfort zone and to push yourself. Instead of just dipping your toe into the pool—

CANNONBALL! I taught for five years at another school before coming to East. Ultimately, I was unhappy. I wanted a life worth living, so I started my job hunt again. I questioned whether or not I wanted to uproot my life because I was comfortable in my position, and my family was nearby. But I knew that I wanted more. So, I took a chance, and accepted a position here at East. I haven't looked back since. It was the best decision I ever made!

**Number 2—Know The importance of self-care.** This one is big. I just discovered self-care a couple of years ago. No matter what you do in life, it's essential that you take time for yourself. When you're stressed out in school, at home, or in the workforce, take a brain break! Do something that makes you



happy, and I'm certain that you'll return to the task with renewed energy and focus.

**Number 1—Drumroll, please—You can and WILL achieve your dreams.** Looking into the audience of graduates is so overwhelming for me, in a good way, because it's like watching the sun rise. When I see all of your faces, I am struck by how beautiful and amazing your potential is. It's completely captivating! You're young and you have the world in your hands. You're the innovators, the creators, and the game-changers. So, looking at you is like the sun rise, because I know that you're all going to accomplish SPECTACULAR things. You all have goals and dreams, and you all have the ability to make them a reality. Believe in yourself, and you will achieve them! Now get out there and change the world!

Congratulations, Class of 2018-- we wish you the best of luck  
in all of your future endeavors! Clap for your friends!