

OUR STUDENTS SPEAK



Ryan M. Moore, '09 January Commencement Address

“Going to school in Philadelphia has allotted us all with a certain unique perspective. We have seen the success of so many individuals at its highest and its lowest. Walking throughout Center City, we are surrounded by lucrative corporations, nationally renowned firms and the pinnacle of the arts. But only steps away from our own classrooms and our own nostalgic freshman dorms, we can vividly see the world of the not-so fortunate; the trappings of the not-so lucrative. Therefore, I believe that we have a certain duty resulting from our experiences in Philadelphia. We must remember that each one of our students has the potential to end up in either theater. Each one has the ability to succeed past their wildest expectations, and each has the undeniable ability to fail. And sometimes it might be more than math, more than science or literature that guides them to create their groove toward success.

“As important as benchmarks might be, as much as standardized tests and curriculum should mean to us all, the greatest teachers in our lives are often those who teach us more than mathematical theorems or the Preamble to the Constitution. I would encourage you all to think about what message you would like to leave with your students — what you really hope that they take away from your classroom. I know I can tell stories of my favorite teachers and what they did to help me structure my life; and I promise you, they all deal with very extracurricular activities . . .

“Above all, though, I would call for you all to remember one thing. And that is that no matter where you end up teaching—whether it be in Detroit or in Pasadena — every student is the same. They all have the same opportunities and they all have the same possibilities, each with an equal opportunity for success

and grandeur in their lives. I call on you all to make it your personal goal to ensure that this remains as even more true tomorrow than it does today. Only a handful of days ago, something miraculous happened in this country, something that only a few decades ago would have been thought impossible. I guarantee you that the educators of this country had a very large part in making that possible, and I guarantee that we will all make many more extraordinary things just as possible for the lives of our own generations of students, no matter the color of their skin, who their parents were, where they grew up, their sexual orientation or their religion.”

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Abigail Reikow, '08 May Commencement Address

"I see here in front of me a class of prospective educators. Many of you have become my friends as well as my classmates. Many of you I would be pleased to have teach my own children some day.

"But I have also listened to a number of conversations expressing fear and hesitation about teaching in an inner-city school system such as the one we have in Philadelphia. While I can't guarantee that working in Philadelphia will ever be easy, that you will always have necessary supplies, that you will always have full administrative and parental support and involvement, I still boldly ask you to reconsider your career choices in whatever educational setting you enter. I would hope that none of you entered this program so that you could relax during the summers, while collecting a paycheck, or because you like to hear yourself talk—which obviously is the reason I chose this

major. I would hope that you came into this career with similar convictions to my own: that a fully developed and critical mind is the most powerful tool we can possess to dig ourselves out, that through taking an active role in young people's lives maybe we can even begin constructing a world where digging out is no longer necessary.

"I recently chose a tattoo on my wrist to serve as a continual reminder of such possibilities. It is an equal sign—a symbol of hope. Educational opportunities are not equal. I know that there are schools, both in and outside this city, very different from the one in which I completed my student teaching. That in these schools 90 percent of the student population is not eligible for free lunch, that these schools have the funds to send their students home with textbooks and that students at these schools have stable homes to which they return each day.

"But for those of us who choose to work in schools where these are not the conditions we face, where we remain the one constant for students whose lives are often too embattled and embittered to see otherwise, I know that it will be the investment of teachers, like me, like you, that will help to balance out a social equation that still favors some, while leaving many others behind. I wear my tattoo, then, as a mark of hope: to bring into reality the meaning it symbolizes."

