

Valedictorian

2026 GRADUATION



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Congratulations! You are graduating and you are a valedictorian this year. That's amazing! What kept you motivated to reach this milestone?

What kept me motivated was the desire to make the most of every opportunity and to become the best version of myself, both academically and personally.

Moving from Sri Lanka to Canada in November 2023 meant beginning an entirely new chapter in my life. Everything was new, new country, new school, new culture, new people, new environment and a completely new life.

While the transition was challenging, I was fortunate to join a community that made me feel welcomed from the very beginning. The encouragement I received from my teachers, classmates, friends, and family inspired me to continually challenge myself and strive for excellence. Receiving recognition for excellence in pre-calculus 10 motivated me even further, and from that point onward, I pushed myself to achieve more, learn more, and grow every day.

What truly motivated me, however, was not just earning good grades. It was knowing that I represented something bigger than myself. I wanted to contribute positively to my school, support my peers, participate in clubs, sports, and activities, and give back to the incredible community that had given so much to me.

Being named Valedictorian is not simply a personal achievement, it represents the kindness, encouragement, and opportunities that helped shape my journey. It reflects everyone who believed in me along the way.

Who has had the biggest impact on your journey to become valedictorian?

I have been blessed to have many extraordinary people who have influenced my journey.

My parents have been my greatest role models. Their sacrifices, guidance, unconditional love, and unwavering belief in me have made every opportunity possible.

My beloved grandparents, whose values and wisdom continue to guide me even though they are no longer with us, laid the foundation upon which I built my dreams.

My brother, my lifelong friend and greatest supporter, whose encouragement, companionship, have been a constant source of strength throughout my journey.

But I would especially like to recognize the teachers and staff at John Barsby Secondary School.

From the very first day I walked through the doors of John Barsby, I experienced something truly special. Our counsellor welcomed my family and me with warmth, kindness, and understanding, turning what could have been an overwhelming experience into one filled with hope and confidence.

Every teacher I encountered made me feel valued, respected, and supported. They didn't simply teach lessons, they built relationships. They encouraged me, challenged me, celebrated my successes, and helped me through difficulties.

They were not only educators; they were mentors, leaders, role models, and sometimes even like friends and parents.

They saw potential in me before I fully saw it in myself.

They uplifted me, shaped me, and inspired me to become the person I am today.

I can honestly say that if I stand here today as Valedictorian, much of the credit belongs to the remarkable teachers and staff at John Barsby Secondary School. Their impact on my life will remain with me forever.

What are you most excited about next?

I am excited to begin the next chapter of my journey at the University of Calgary, where I will pursue a degree in Architecture. Architecture is a field that beautifully combines creativity, innovation, engineering and problem-solving; qualities that have always inspired me. I look forward to learning, growing, and one day contributing to communities by designing spaces that improve people's lives. At the same time, I am excited to meet new people, embrace new challenges, and continue making a positive impact wherever life takes me.

Fill in the blank: "High school taught me _____".

High school taught me that success is not measured only by achievements, but by the character we build, the relationships we cherish, and the positive impact we have on others. It taught me the importance of perseverance, kindness, leadership, and believing in ourselves. Most importantly, it taught me that no matter where we come from or how different our journeys may be, we are capable of overcoming challenges, supporting one another, and achieving extraordinary things together.

If you could choose a song to walk across the stage as you graduate- what would it be?

The message behind this song deeply resonates with me because it reminds us that with determination, perseverance, humility and belief in ourselves, ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things.

The lyrics celebrate dreams, hard work, and making a positive difference in the world, values that have guided me throughout my journey.

As I walk across the stage with my fellow graduates, I believe this song would perfectly capture the spirit of the Class of 2026. A class defined not only by achievements, but by resilience, kindness, teamwork, and the belief that our best days are still ahead of us.