

Gabriella Claros - Concord High School

Good Afternoon Family, Friends, Admin, staff, and Concord's class of 2026! My name is Gabriella Claros and it has been a pleasure to go to school with all of you! During our four years we have experienced a lot.

The small goals, while they might be minuscule they matter. The big dreams, while they might be overly ambitious, they matter. The struggles, while they might feel like the end of the world they aren't. That's what the graduating class of 2026 is made of, the struggles of submitting an assignment late, staying up till one in the morning to study for the test the next day, or even forgetting stuff at the last minute. The dreams of finally getting into that school, getting that D1 offer, or even just making it here right now. The small goals of passing that one class, getting through that tough week, and just finally realizing the impossible was possible. That is what carried us forward to this day and what will continue to keep us going for years to come.

This class, the Concord Class of 2026, is filled with dedicated athletes, actors, artists, leaders, and overall individuals who overcame and therefore, made a difference. We are activists who made our voice heard in the real world and in school dilemmas, whether that was in the form of art or verbal protests. We are artists, getting top rankings in Family, Career, and Community Leader of America (FCCLA). Beginning to shape the future in the palm of our hands. We are athletes who dedicated time and effort to perfecting craft and skills leading to deep playoffs runs, more than 25 all conference athletes, and state champions. We are actors and crew who brought life upon the concord stage, growing the theatrical arts, receiving finalist parts for the Blumy's and writing original plays. We are musicians who have paved the way for the

band for four years. We are Community advocates who have gained certifications in healthcare and are first responders ready to make a difference within the concord community in and outside of school. Dedication, that's the word, the class of 2026 is filled with dedicated students whose focus has prepared them to take their actions to the next level.

If we are all being honest with ourselves, high school was not easy. There were moments of self doubt whether it was in the classroom, on the field, or even in the halls. Moments where we felt behind, and even moments where everything felt too much. Those nights where we would tell ourselves “ I'll figure it out tomorrow” and yet that wasn't always the case. It was not perfectly planned, nor was it perfectly executed but it got done, for the most part.

As a class, we showed how we didn't make it through high school because everything went right but rather we learned how to keep moving forward and how to adapt when the challenges felt too heavy. We were able to do this with having the right support system that kept us going. Whether it was Mr. Defazio who gave you a fist bump every morning rooting you on, the announcement from Mr.Hachen wishing you a good morning before the speaker cut him off for the third time, or the friend who saved you a seat at lunch every afternoon. There was always someone in your corner, a coach like Strode, an administrator like Mr.Hachen, a teacher like Mrs. Deal, or even just a classmate. There was always a person who was there making sure you were ready for the next round.

Each of us has a different story, faced different challenges, had different goals, and are on different paths. Some of us are going to college to become doctors, some

engineers, and some lawyers. Some are going into the workforce, while others are heading to serve and some are still figuring things out, which is perfectly ok. Because if we have learned one thing these past four years it is that there is no one way to succeed.

What matters now is that we keep going. Keep setting those small goals, those big dreams, and not letting struggles define you but rather redirect you. Stepping into the future might feel uncertain, a little scary. But If we were able to get through everything that brought us here, and handle the moments that we thought we couldn't then we are more prepared than we think.

So as we step into the next chapter of our lives remember that the small goals, the big dreams, and the struggles got us to this moment. All of it mattered to create the person sitting in this room today.

Your futures are filled with greatness but on behalf of the community of Concord just remember that you'll have a home at Concord for a lifetime waiting to welcome you with open arms and heart. Because once a spider, always a spider. Congratulations Class of 2026! Go Spiders!