

Ben:

Good evening, 8th grade teachers, family, classmates, and friends. Thank you all for coming out tonight to celebrate an important milestone in our educational journey. My name is Benjamin Hoffman and I'm honored to be a valedictorian. I would like to begin my speech by acknowledging everyone who has helped us reach this point. First, I want to thank all of the teachers and staff who were there when we struggled with math problems or didn't understand a question. They taught us not only subjects like English Language Arts and math, but also valuable life skills that we will carry with us forever. Next, I want to express my gratitude to my family. Without their support and encouragement, I wouldn't be standing here today as a valedictorian. They have helped me navigate through challenges and have been my greatest supporters. Finally, I would like to thank my classmates. Together, we have grown into the people we are today. We have collaborated, learned, and persevered side by side. As we embark on the next four years of high school, I hope you carry these memories with you. While high school may feel intimidating, it is simply another significant step in our journey to grow as individuals. I know we are ready because we have already supported each other through tough times. As we reflect on these final moments of middle school, let's remember that the most important thing is not just the grades on a piece of paper, but the effort we put in and the perseverance we display. This is just the beginning of our story, and I look forward to making unforgettable memories with all of you. I want to leave you with this, Class of 2025: let's continue to persevere through hardships and learn to grow together. Thank you, and congratulations, Class of 2025!

Olivia:

Hello, my name is Olivia Kassa, and I am honored to be one of this year's Valedictorians. I have attended Columbia Elementary since I was four years old, when I joined T.K. Throughout the years, I have worked hard in my academics and joined many extracurricular activities. I have always had my family cheering me on and motivating me to keep going. For example, when my dad and stepmom both took the extra time to help me with whatever I didn't understand in any subject, even if they didn't know how to do it, they always tried their best. Or my mom and stepdad calming me down if I ever started to feel overwhelmed with school work by forcing me to look at the bright side and not be so hard on myself. They all encouraged me to be the best person I can possibly be, and helped me whenever I needed them. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be up here today. So thank you to my amazing parents, my mom, stepmom, dad, and stepdad. You are awesome, and I am so grateful to have you. Along with my two stepbrothers and three siblings, you all make my life so much more exciting and fun, even if you make me a bit crazy sometimes, I still love you all.

With all the things I have done in my life, band has definitely had a significant impact that will hopefully last forever. I was first put into band in 5th grade with all of my fellow students, and ever since then, I have had a love for music. This is something that I feel passionate about and is something I want to pursue in high school and the future. Going to Columbia gave me this opportunity to explore my interests and find what I really like. This school is special with all the staff and students in it. I am insanely lucky to have grown up and later met all of these amazing people who have shared these years with me; they are one reason I am who I am today, and I am grateful for all of you. I will forever cherish my memories here, but I also can't wait to make new ones. Good job to everyone here, I wish you the best of luck.

Madilyn:

Good evening everyone. My name is Madilyn Andrews and I am honored to be one of this year's Valedictorians. I have attended Columbia Elementary since I was in Kindergarten and I consider it a privilege to be graduating 8th grade with the wonderful class of 2025 here tonight. I would like to start off by first thanking everyone for attending this graduation ceremony. It makes me so happy to see all of you sitting here and your support throughout the years has not gone unnoticed. To the families of the graduating class, thank you for always being there for all of us. Whether it was helping with homework, teaching us how to work with others, or even just guiding us through hard times, your support is greatly appreciated. I know for a fact that I wouldn't have been able to be where I am now if it were not for the many people in my family who encouraged me to always do my best. Thank you so much. To the amazing teachers and staff of this school, thank you for acting as a second family to all of us. Even on days when we dreaded coming to class, you all made it feel worth it with your welcome and encouraging spirit. And lastly, to the students up here tonight, thank you for being so supportive throughout all of these years. Each and every one of you affected how I got to where I am now, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Although I am deeply proud of all the work I put into standing up here tonight as a valedictorian, I want to remind you all that getting a good grade on your paper does not define the person you are or who you become. There is a quote by Taylor Swift that I value deeply and I would like to share it with all of you here tonight. "No matter what happens in life, be good to people. Being good to people is a wonderful legacy to leave behind." As we move into this next chapter of our lives, I want us all to remember this. Because yes, grades matter. They show hard work, determination, and effort. But they don't tell the whole story. Your report card does not measure kindness. A test score does not show whether you helped someone when they fell or made someone laugh when they were having a bad day. And I am so grateful to my family for teaching me these values that I hope to carry with me wherever I go. At the end of the day, the type of person you are and the way you treat others around you is how you will be remembered.

Throughout elementary school, we all faced many challenges, whether they were academic, social, or personal, but we got through them together. Overtime, we grew not only as students, but as human beings. So as we head to high school, I challenge you all to continue to strive to be the best version of yourselves, whatever that may mean to you. Always remember that being a good

person is a legacy worth leaving. Congratulations graduating class of 2025. We did it!

Now Mrs. Wood will present the President's Academic Award.

