

Year 12 Farewell Speech

15 years ago I landed on AstroTurf...

There I said it. I can change the order of the words...

On AstroTurf I landed 15 years ago
I, 15 years ago, landed on astroTurf
Astro turf on landed I years ago 15

To be more precise, I landed on the astroTurf of the preschool playground, the crust of planet IGS. As a young extra-terrestrial, I had no choice but to step out of my space-craft, and into this world. *Our* world of unique festivities, numerous languages and clever, tender creatures. International Grammar School. Or, International *Grandma* School, as I knew it then. A misnomer that I corrected, when I realised two things:

Firstly, that all of you, the IGS class of 2020, were much too young and spritely to fit such a description. And secondly - that my grandma was lightyears away, so all of you would have to make do as my replacement family.

Now, staring out at your kind faces, I know that the strength of our familial bond would be noticed by the blind if they had even a split second of sight.

Fate, it seems, had allowed me an entirely different set of given circumstances to Megamind. (The mega-minded blue alien protagonist in his own Dreamworks cinematic masterpiece, he who ill-fatedly lands behind the walls of a prison after fleeing his war-ridden homeplanet.)

Before his landing in the most dangerous of places, Megamind's father leaves him with half-a-prophecy;

"You are destined for..."

The indefinite ellipses begs a question that haunts Megamind:

"Destined for what?"

In confinement, the only available answer that he finds to such ambiguity is *evil*.

In the loving arms of IGS however, one can only choose *good*. And this is proven by all of you.

You have brought upstanding qualities into our little planet's atmosphere: *intellect*, in the work that you produce, *strength*, evident by your ability to manage irritable, inquisitive parents during promotional tours of the school, *empowerment* during impassioned online debates, which highlighted your sense of justice, and *positivity* through your commitment to bringing cheer to sports carnivals, Artsfest, International Day, our parties, as well as into the study space polls. And most importantly, *connection*, which materialised as a shoulder to lean on, in moments where you simply sat and enjoyed one another's company, unknowingly coaxing much needed smiles on the worst of days.

It was in year 5 that we began to contribute to the purity of planet IGS. Back then, I had a teacher who engendered the class to clean the floor, and not only that, but to go as far as to forage through teenee-tiny scraps of paper, one by one. It only took her claim that one scrap each week was enchanted for us to work diligently. Words cannot explain the pride that one would feel when they found the "magic piece of paper." A small arm would rise up powerfully, displaying the rubbish, as though it were a diamond.

In year 12, I have witnessed many good deeds that stopped our little world from spinning out of control. Perhaps the most crucial was the saving of a life. It was early on in the year, and acquainted us with the reality that mixed family life can get complicated sometimes. This was the life of a goldfish. It hit the study space like a meteor. And we fell into sudden hysteria. It was thanks to the bold Lily McGuinness that the creature returned to its own galaxy, (being Broadway Shopping Centre.)

To those who have come and gone much like goldfish, and even to those who “never left”, I must thank you for being a part of our collective memory.

Thank you most of all, to the young man who left behind footprints with moon boots. To Max Meyer, the astronaut who was attentive and bravehearted enough to outshine us all. And whose history will become our legacy.

A conclusion that I have determined because of something I learned in year 6. (When studying for my IRT project about what would be left if humanity disappeared.) Once everything man-made decays, it is an astronaut's footprint on the surface of the moon that will remain. Whilst Max's rocket departed too early, he may rest assured, as he sits out there, on a waxing crescent moon, fishing for stars - that his mark on this school will last a million years.

I must also thank our most essential supporters, the IGS staff. Thank you for seeing us for who we really are. For believing in us with such dedication that you inspired self-confidence. It is impossible to imagine the amount of time that you have put into helping us to succeed, and for that I cannot express our gratitude enough. You have helped us to evolve with your love and knowledge, and yes, your teachings have transformed our lives in regards to our academic prowess, but also in mysterious intrinsic ways that you would never expect.

And of course a word about the supreme matriarch of this galaxy, Mrs Colnan, your imminent and tactful approach to leadership shaped the culture of this planet for the better. Your compassion has bled through all of us, leading to widespread acceptance, and resulting social cohesion. Personally, what I respect about you most of all is your innate and impenitent curiosity. Which permeated during one speech that you delivered about the beauty of a murmuration of starlings. I vicariously experienced wonder, as you showed everyone a video of little birds cinematically flying over a field, as perfect as a constellation. I do not recall blinking once. Thank you for embodying my life-long definition of 'great leadership.'

Last week, I received a radio-transmission from 5 years ago, about another prominent leader in our community. It was sent in year 7, by Katerina Alexander, and by my past self. It was about Mr Galea, who we had just begun to know and love for his paradoxical treatment of *rosters*, which simultaneously entailed retribution and respect. A unique approach perfectly exemplified by this statement made by Maximus Stolikas, “he's the only man I know who has told me he wants to knock me out and also has a poster of me in his office.”

Thank you, Mr Galea, for not seeing us only as our mistakes and rebellion, but also as our determination to change, which you never failed to cultivate. You played a major role in our growth, which led Hayley Dobbin to once remark, “he has helped more youth, more deeply than the prime minister has.” The Year 12 Class of 2020 proves that claim.

Despite Mr Galea's inspirational approach to teaching, the transmission reminded me of his one glaring weakness: his poor taste in footwear. It stated: “get this man a new pair of crocs when you graduate”

I PULL OUT CROCS FROM THE PODIUM SHEEPISHLY Sir, you may collect these as a token of appreciation from all of our past and present selves, later on.

To the younger years who are perhaps considering sending messages to your graduating selves, be aware that they are closer than you think.

So I advise you to be as connected to your schooling experience as you can be, and to try as hard as you can before it ends. Dance your heart out, whether it was at the primary disco, or Year 12 formal! Be strange, do chin-ups on a tree! Ask your teachers for help, remind your friends how much they mean to you and tell your crush how you feel!

Because no matter what, it's possible that 15 years from now, you will be plummeting down a skyscraper. Despairing that you allowed your animated journalist ex, Roxanne Ritchie (voiced by Tina Fey) to be caught in the iron fist of an autocratic involuntary celibate of your own design. Your only consolation being the age old question echoing throughout your megamind:

“Destined for what?”

The answer being, well... I don't know.

But you may as well channel the resilience that you developed in High School, when playing Kahoot, and looking around your classroom at a sea of green computer screens, whilst your own had you seeing red. Or when being faced with the outbreak of a virus, and months subsequent online schooling in isolation. Times when you chose, despite the direness of your given circumstances, not to give up.

So I don't know what you are destined for, other than to continue to try.

I will leave everyone with an extract from a poem by Shane Koyczan, whose words empowered me to not give up when school felt tough, appropriately titled: The Student, an identity that has engulfed our sense of self, and one that we mustn't reject now...

He writes;

*I give in, surrendering to an impulse
Somewhat believing that my imprisonment will not involve torture
If I can confess everything I know
I know nothing*

*

*I sit before flowers
hoping that they will train me in the art of opening up
I know nothing
but I am here to learn*

Now that we have learnt all that we can, and that we have explored every region that planet IGS has to offer, it is time to go. Let's take off into an adult world in which we will find ourselves confused, and alien, but curious too.

Ready?
3... 2... 1...
Blast-off !

Zara Upfold