"I AM PROUD TO BE A ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOLAR"

ST. AUGUSTINE

SCHOLARS PROGRAM

ST. AUGUSTINE GRADUATION CEREMONY
JUNE 22, 2010
ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CHURCH
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

PREFACE

Speech scripts are ordinarily flat, far removed from the electricity of the moment. The passion of the speaker, the emotional response of the audience and the event context of the words are not to be found on the page left behind at the rostrum.

Nonetheless, we offer you these ideas formulated by our graduates as they attempted to capture the meaning of perhaps the proudest moment of their young lives. Their thoughts provide insight as to who we are and hope to be.

We who know them and love them would prophesy, without much risk, that these young Black men will celebrate more great moments in a very bright future!

J A

Good evening students, faculty, staff, family and friends. My name is . I was born in the Bronx, N.Y. where there is an extremely high unemployment rate. It is also composed of a strong attraction for criminal elements such as street gangs, which were exploding in number and beginning to support themselves with a large scale of drug dealing. Luckily for me, and with the help of my brother, Richard , I was able to propel myself to a preferred school and city.

Before I came to St. Augustine, I was constantly maintaining a grade point average of fifty, or if I got lucky, I would get a sixty, which I considered passing. I was just the most insolent, confused and ignorant child you would ever meet. As you can see, I was basically just throwing my life away.

Being here this year, in St. Augustine, has meant something to me. It has been a turning point in my life. St. Augustine has helped me embrace the positive side of my life and dispatch the negative. I can undo the doubts that were told to me.

In addition to my acquisition of achieving my dreams, I would like to thank the most amazing, gentle, kind, magnificent, superb, helpful, loving, understanding, unforgettable, polite, unique, devoted guy ever…..Fr. Durkin. Fr. Durkin has accepted me as one of his own – a St. Augustine Scholar. Even though I never thought I could do it, he persuaded me to try. When there was no one to talk to, he was there. This is why I want to thank Father Durkin.

I would also like to thank my big brother, Richard , who took me into his own hands and has encouraged me to do well. I consider my big brother as the best brother, a delight, a marvelous brother. I would also love to thank the two most important females in my life; my loving mother and my caring sister. They maintained the patience to watch over my foolish behavior.

I would also like to thank my teachers, there were those days I looked forward to your classes because of the lessons you taught. You helped me fulfill my potential, exceed my likes and for this I thank you.

I would also like to thank the family, especially for their generous and kind help.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my eighth grade brothers, even though we had our ups and down, our passionate, playful and depressed moments. This is the most unforgettable year ever. When we usually argued over pencils, a basketball game, or even who is better at something, we all felt the same way about each other. I would like to thank this class for being a big help in my life, whether it was on the court or in class, I
am very grateful to have this exciting eighth grade class. This is why, "I look up to the sky and know the world is mine, I know that all my life I made it, I made it. I used to dream about the life I'm living now, I know there is no doubt because I made it," with the help of God, my St. Augustine family, my family, and the family.

"I am a St. Augustine Scholar in the pursuit of excellence, making a change and that change will make a difference!" Thank you.

B C

Good evening, I am . First of all, I would like to thank my mom for having me and loving me. I would like to thank my grandma for teaching me how to be respectful and for loving me. I would like to thank God for listening to my prayers.

I was at St. Augustine for three years. I can proudly say that St. Augustine was the best school I've ever been to. St. Augustine prepared me for high school and it taught me that I must respect myself before I can respect others. Most of all, St. Augustine has taught me how to be a better man. I am "a man for God, and a man for others." My classmates and I didn't see eye to eye from time to time, but we were there for each other.

My teachers actually cared and listened about what you had to say. They were always there when I needed them. They got me from where I was, to where I needed to be, which is to stay in school and get an education.

Our school slogan is "Young men in pursuit of excellence." No one is perfect, but it is the state of mind that you set, so that someday you may achieve your goals.

I am a St. Augustine Scholar. I learn from my mistakes, I know right from wrong, I will succeed.

Next year, I will be attending Canisius High School and pursuing my goal by going straight to college afterwards. Without St. Augustine, I doubt if any of this would have been possible. I now have endless opportunities. The long, extended days, and tough nights with pages of homework have finally paid off.

It feels like yesterday when Mr. Dorcely gave me my first hundred and Sister Timothy gave me my first JUG. Things go by fast when you are having fun. I never knew how much I would miss St. Augustine until it became closer for me to go.

I am a St. Augustine Scholar and I'm in pursuit of excellence. Education is a moral goal for me and I will define my success in life and provide for my family. I am a great somebody. I am a St. Augustine Scholar, how about you?

Thank you.

A D

St. Augustine made a huge difference in my life. Before St. Augustine's I was rude and undisciplined. School was just a place to meet friends for six hours then go home. I used to talk back constantly. Not to say that I still don't talk back, I do it less. The mistakes I made not only hurt me, but hurt the people that cared about me. Even though I knew that, I didn't want to change the life I was living. Thankfully, my mother put me in this school and it turned my life around. Even though, at first, I didn't think I was going to enjoy my last year here, or the years prior, I did.

I would like to thank Sister Timothy for helping me compose this speech. Also, because whenever a staff member or friend of the school got sick, she would always be the first to suggest a get-well card. Secondly, I would like to thank Elder Hill. In my personal opinion Elder Hill is the school's inspiration. Every time our class was doing bad or too many people were failing, he would try to give us a boost, not to make us do better, but to make us want to do better. So we had to take his words to heart.

I would also like to thank my coach, PE teacher, and social studies teacher, Mr. Dorcely. Even though Mr. Dorcely wasn't the type of teacher you would give an apple to, he taught me and my classmates the three D's to succeed: desire, discipline, and dedication. Any teacher you ask would say our class didn't always get along. But, during the basketball season, I felt a connection between each of us and that it was our duty to not get into trouble so that we could be at every game. We all came together for a common goal. That brought us together. In the classroom, in Social Studies, if we did not get something, Mr. Dorcely would say it in a scenario that we'd understand.

My reading teacher, Mrs. Mulhern was a unique teacher. If you just had your work on time, and all the answers were wrong, she would be happy with that. She would always go out of her way to help us. She came to as many basketball games as she could. And, during track season, she would bring us snacks and Gatorade after we were done running or jumping.

Next, I would like to thank Ms. Crossman. Ms. Crossman was very patient; she took a lot of our nonsense that she didn't have to. But even so, instead of relaxing for the last two hours of school, in her cool, breezy room, she would come to our study hall and ask if any of us needed help or if we understood the work. Lastly, I would like to thank Father Durkin. Father Durkin is the reason for the turnaround of my life. There were times during my time at St. Augustine that I should have been expelled, but he always believed that I was a good person. He helped me get into one of the best high schools in Western, New York, and he always tried to help us.

My three years in St. Augustine have been the most life changing in my life. Thank you to everybody that ever helped me to succeed. I am a St. Augustine Scholar and I know that the street life is not the right life. Thank you.

A H

Good evening, I am . St. Augustine is not an ordinary school, it's a family. Even though we argue and fight, we look out for each other. On the basketball court we work as a team without any arguments or fighting. While sitting on the bench or on the court, we cheer for each other. When we struggle with our work, we help each other. St. Augustine is like a new beginning, where you can forget the past, and start all over. It is especially for people who struggled in their old schools.

As I spent my time at St. Augustine, I continued to see changes, in good ways, such as attitude, academics, and athletics. St. Augustine provided me with work and programs no other schools would've done. They helped and changed me a lot. I've learned how to control my anger that had been giving me a bad reputation. I learned to study much more than I used to.

I would like to thank my parents for encouraging me to do well in school. I would like to thank Father Durkin for helping me make a change during the three years I have been in St. Augustine. I would like to thank Mr. Dorcely for coaching and helping me improve my basketball skills. I would like to thank Elder Hill and Mrs. Mulhern for increasing my knowledge in English and Reading. I would like to thank Sister Timothy and the sisters for showing me how to respect elders and my peers. Last, but not least, I would like to thank Ms. Dona for helping me and my family since 1999.

I am a St. Augustine Scholar and I am pursuing excellence.

K M

Good evening, my name is . I've attended St. Augustine for two years. During those two years I couldn't wait to leave. I was always getting into trouble but then I started to realize it was my fault. After awhile I started to change and started to like the school. Now I don't want to leave.

I learned things at St. Augustine that I couldn't learn anywhere else. At St. Augustine, we were a family. We talked, played, laughed, worked, and had fun. Now that I am leaving I'd like to thank my mom and dad, my teachers, and my friends. I am a St. Augustine Scholar and I'm continuing my journey in pursuit of excellence.

N M

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, my name is . I had started attending St. Augustine two years ago. During those two years I made a tremendous change in my attitude. The thing that made me change is faith.

Since the day I became a scholar, there was always one teacher that was always expecting me to do better. It was Father Durkin. I declare Father Durkin to be a true father because I always felt that I was one of the worst students in St. Augustine. But, Father Durkin always believed that I could be a better person, a better brother and a better son. In the past, I wanted to go to a better school where there were no problems and such, but after awhile, I realized I was already there, in my home, St. Augustine. It is where I have brothers everywhere in the building.

The school has caring teachers such as Mr. Dorcely, Mrs. Mulhern, Ms. Crossman, Elder Hill, the sisters and Father Durkin. All these teachers taught and prepared me for high school one way or another, whether I liked it or not. I couldn't have asked for better teachers than them.

There are several very important people I would like to thank. First, my mother and father, thank you for putting me in this school. I would like to thank the person that always bragged about my artwork, pushed me to be a good artist and a student, she is a great teacher and a mother, she is Mrs. Krum. I want to thank you for all the time you gave up and for everything you have done for me.

The next person is a man who always believed in me, like Father, but he helped me become a better athlete in basketball. Though he would probably be ashamed of my obnoxious behavior, and the numerous times I got into trouble – I want to thank you, Mr. Dorcely.

The last people I want to thank are students who always encouraged me to be a good person, to behave better, and to set a good example for the younger men in the school – and my brother, . You are all appreciated.

Thank you and good night.

A N

St. Augustine has made a difference in my life. Before St. Augustine, I made some bad decisions. I made mistakes and hurt others. With the help of my parents and teachers, I've learned to respect others. I've also learned that I am capable of doing anything with my mind and heart.

The teachers at St. Augustine were there for me. They were caring, kind and generous. They taught us good manners such as not making fun of someone because of their skin color, how they talk or how they dress. I also learned to be patient. St. Augustine's has helped me grow into a fine young man. The teachers continually said positive things to me such as, "You can do it," "You are talented," and "You are intelligent."

I live up to high and positive expectations. I am dedicated to my work. I am disciplined and have a desire to accomplish things in my life. I am working and living up to my expectations. My goals for the future are to go to the best high school and staying there. I will go to the best college and then become a Math teacher.

The three years I have been at St. Augustine's I have learned the most important thing to me. That is to be a peacemaker, and to leave good peace prints or precedents. The precedents we set are showing gratitude, and being kind towards one another.

Sports made St. Augustine enjoyable. Our teams always work hard on the basketball court, on the track and in school. We always carried a positive attitude wherever we went.

"I AM A ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOLAR, I AM MAKING A CHANGE AND THAT CHANGE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!"

J W

Good evening, my name is . When I first came to St. Augustine, I was a boy that was all over the place. I didn't know what to do, and didn't know what to expect. But, as days went by, I started to get used to it, and I learned some new things I will never forget. St. Augustine's has taught the importance of 8th grade and prepared us for high school.

This school has also helped me make my decision on the high school I want to go to. I have decided to go to St. Joseph Collegiate Institute (SJCI) to be a Marauder. From there I will strive to get accepted to and attend a good college, and to be successful.

From here on out, I know St. Augustine's has helped me to get to where I am now. My mom always said, "Don't take it for granted because it will help you in the long run." I want to thank her, my dad and my sister for being behind me 100%. I also want to thank the teachers and staff for helping us every day.

My classmates (a.k.a. my brothers) and I had a lot of fun during the school year. When we had free time during Mr. Dorcely's class, we would crack jokes about him and he would crack jokes about us. When we played basketball or were in track, we cheered each other on, even when we weren't on the court or field. Even when we lost our last basketball game, we were there for each other.

Overall, my 8th grade school year was the best school year of my life!!! Thank you!

The NativityMiguel Middle School of Buffalo

21 Davidson Avenue Buffalo, New York 14215
(716) 836-5188

One School on Two Campuses

St. Monica Campus for Young Women

Our Mission: To provide motivated, low-income students with the opportunity to graduate from high school in a setting that will prepare them for college. This is accomplished through a strong middle-school program that includes skilled and dedicated teachers, extended school days and school year, small, single-gender classes and ongoing support through high school graduation.

Our Model: Endorsed by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the NativityMiguel model is patterned after a Catholic inner-city education program developed in New York City in the 1970's. Since 1989, this model has been replicated in over 60 schools serving underserved communities in 27 states.

Our Mission Effectiveness Standards:

- Single gender programs for Grades 5-8
- Faith Based
- Service to the Poor and Marginalized
- Addresses the Needs of the Whole Child
- Partners with the Family
- Extended Day and Year
- Commitment Beyond Graduation
- Effective Administrative Structure
- On-going Assessment and Inquiry

Our Mission with the Poor: The most recent census data shows that 28.7 percent of Buffalo residents live below the poverty level including nearly 43 percent of the city's children. Ninety percent of our students come from poor families. The family financial commitment of $500 to $2,400 covers less than 25% of operating costs. The balance is raised through private sources including foundation grants and individual donations. All donations are considered an investment in the life of a child.

Our Co-Endorsing Organizations: We are co-endorsed by the Society of Jesus, the Sisters of Mercy, the Christian Brothers, the Daughters of the Heart of Mary and True Bethel Baptist Church.

For More Information:

View our school DVD at: www.NativityMiguelBuffalo.org

Contact our President: Nancy M. Langer

(716) 836-5188 or NMLanger@aol.com

St. Augustine Campus for Young Men

Our Families: The families served include African-American, Latino and African "asylees" from violence and persecution in Africa. As they enter the school, many of our students are performing below grade level academically and already showing signs of negative street influence including poor self esteem, lack of self confidence, and limited anger control.

Age: Grades Fifth to Eighth. December 2009 enrollment is 83 students (52 boys and 31 girls), a 60% increase compared to 2007.

Means: From a family that would otherwise not be able to afford a non-public education. Ninety percent of our families qualify for the federal lunch program, an indication of poverty status.

Situation: From a neighborhood (or living situation) where they would be vulnerable to negative influences from "the street."

Academic Ability: Ability to improve from their current level; not intended to "cherry pick" the brightest students.

A Positive Attitude: The key factor for admission is a positive attitude towards self, academics, and peers. Student attendance rate is 96%. Our students are in school for 8.5 hours a day and up to 11 months a year.

Our Graduates: Our graduates are attending top public, charter, and Catholic schools including St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, Canisius High School, Bishop Timon-St. Jude, St. Mary's High School, Mount St. Mary Academy, Mt. Mercy, Nardin Academy, Cardinal O'Hara, Hutchinson Technical, Maritime Charter School and Tapestry Charter School.

Our Success: Even students whose standardized test scores would lead one to believe them incapable of high school achievement are proving that hard work and determination are themselves tools for success.

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Opportunity. Family. Faith. Potential. Success.

www.nativitymiguelbuffalo.org