

St Mary's College for the deaf
Dux of 2022 - Sarah Jin.

Hello everyone,

I feel extremely honoured to be able to stand here today and present this speech to each and every one of you.

First of all, I want to say thank you to all the teachers and staff members for always being there for me, and supporting me in my journey. I really cherish my time in St Mary's, and I will definitely try to visit when I can.

So, in Year 12 I did English as an Additional Language, Chinese, Maths Methods, Further Maths, Chemistry and Psychology.

Something really important I learned was to choose subjects that you know you might enjoy or be interested in because you are then going to actively spend the time studying for it, which will set you up for success in those subjects. For example, a subject I really enjoyed doing was Maths. I would spend 2-3 hours per night studying for it just because I enjoyed it a lot, thus I ended up being quite proficient at it.

Now I want to talk about English as a subject in school.

From a young age I was always a little insecure about my English, because English was not my first language and because of my hearing impairment I don't get to practise my English as much as other people my age. So I always believed that English was going to be a weakness of mine and no matter how much time I spent learning it by myself I was never going to catch up to my hearing peers. But guess what, I got the highest score in English in the end of year exams. But that wouldn't have been possible without hard work.

I remember three or four weeks before the end of year exams I was smashing out one to two 1500 word essays per day, because I was really worried that I was going to do the least well in English compared to my other subjects. Therefore, the lesson that I learned is that hard work does pay off. If you work hard, you will definitely see results, it may not be the result you wanted to see, but without hard work there most likely will not be any results.

And also, I think even though you think you might not be good at something, it is still very important to believe and have confidence in yourself, so you have motivation to work on it, and not think that it is unachievable.

Next, I want to talk about some of the challenges I faced as a deaf student in the hearing community, how it impacted my studies, and whether I was able to overcome them.

In Year 12, there were some classes that were really noisy, and I struggled to hear what the teacher was saying sometimes especially when they were also wearing a mask, and so I knew I was missing out a ton of information. Thus, I had to advocate for myself by giving the teacher the remote microphone for

them to wear, and their voices became much clearer, and learning became so much more accessible for me. So a very important thing I learnt was to advocate for myself, so I can minimize the amount of information that is missed.

And especially in Year 12 I was very anxious about missing information in class time as you never know when you're going to need the information later on, so I had to take the initiative, which would allow me to get the most out of my learning, such as moving to the front of the class, giving the teacher the remote microphone, or asking them if they could speak a bit louder. Just remember you are doing what's best for your learning, so don't be afraid to advocate for yourself.

Also I explicitly remember when we first got back to on-site learning on a permanent basis, at recess and lunch times I often felt quite alone especially when I was with a group of people because I couldn't hear what they were saying. Because in terms of my social life I'm at a disadvantage compared to other people, it just cemented my belief that I needed to work hard and set up a good future for myself. I've always been a hard worker since I was young, it's probably an innate part of my personality I guess, but because of my hearing disability it gave me a bit more purpose for working hard.

I'm not sure if I were born hearing, I would still be the same person I am today. But regardless of that I am glad to be where I am at right now, and all the qualities about myself helped to shape the person I am today, so I am grateful for it.

Even though I couldn't hear other people well in a social setting at school, I was quite lucky to have met some really kind people and became friends with them. One of them in particular always looked out for me and made me feel included whenever we were together.

So having some of those friendships can really make you feel like no matter whatever happens they will always be by your side. Therefore, it is also very important to have those strong friendships as it adds a lot of happiness and value to your whole day, and you will feel more motivated to go to class and be ready to learn.

Following this, I want to talk about things that I did throughout my high school journey that helped me a lot. One, during class time I always pay attention to the teacher when they are speaking, and make sure to absorb in the content as they are going through it.

One extra thing I do that benefits me a lot is I preview some of the topics a couple days beforehand, that is before the teacher even goes through the topics with the class, so I already have a brief idea of what the topic is going to be about. This helped me so much because when I then listened to the teacher

explain those topics it just made so much more sense, and it made the lessons much more engaging.

One of the main advantages that previewing brings is that you are going into class with clarity in terms of knowing what you already know and what you don't, so you know what areas to focus on instead of being overwhelmed by the amount of new content you have to learn in the lesson.

Another thing I do is if I have questions, I will ask the teacher because I know they will be very happy to help me. I remember being quite stuck on some concepts and I spent hours on my own trying to figure it out and was still left confused and lost.

But when I asked the teacher, and we went through it together, it became so much clearer. So, if you have questions please ask your teachers, it will save you so much time and energy.

Following this, having a good balance between your school life and life outside of school is also crucial. It is good to be studious, but it is also very important to have leisure time where you can engage in hobbies and interests.

I remember I really liked to listen to music, and I think that really provided a place for me where I can fully relax, not worry about things, allowing my mind to declutter and regroup itself, so when I'm ready to study my mind has been refreshed and is ready to process information.

Now moving on to future aspirations, literally only a few months back, I didn't really have a clear idea of what I wanted to do in the future.

But I knew I wanted to excel in my studies, so when it really comes to the day where I had to decide what I wanted to do, Uni and course-wise, my choices won't be limited. Now I am starting the Bachelor of Biomedicine course at University of Melbourne very soon, so I am very excited for this new chapter of my life.

So that wraps up my whole speech. Thank you for listening, and I wish you all success in your studies and future.

By Sarah Jin