Thank you, Brian for that introduction.

I think it goes without saying that I was pretty happy when I was named this year’s Salutatorian. But this was hedged by the fact that I’d ultimately have to give a speech here today. I’ll be quite honest, like many, I don’t like public speaking (surprising, considering how much I speak otherwise) – I dreaded writing my speech and I dreaded talking before such a large crowd of my peers, their families and friends, and district officials.

As a 17 year old, I’m not so sure I have the capacity to inspire. I haven’t lived through too much adversity (except I still have an iPhone 4 and nobody has a charger), and I haven’t done anything particularly amazing during my thus-far brief stay on Earth (although I have beaten 2048 my fair share of times). I’m still yet to figure out why I’m up here, as any number of us could be speaking in my place.

But, through some series of events, I’ve ended up here, so here we go: As far as we know, we only have one shot at life. I ask: Why waste it? Why spend our precious, fleeting existence doing things that make us unhappy? Now, given, don’t spend your life in such a way as to harm others, but do do what makes you happy. Don’t waste the time you have here – make your mark, and enjoy yourselves at every step of the way. Don’t follow someone else’s path, if you don’t want it to be
your path. Live, and live for you (especially now, when most of us have few obligations to anyone but ourselves).

But, honestly I think it is best that we take this time to say “thank you” to everyone who has helped us reach this point, and I believe each “thank you” warrants a hearty applause. Thank you to the teachers, for educating and inspiring us on a daily basis. Thank you to the school administrators, for keeping this ship afloat. Thank you to the janitorial staff, for cleaning up the mess we’ve inevitably made. Thank you to the friends, who have made school enjoyable. And, I think most important of all, thank you to the families, who have been with us through every part of the ride.

Really, thank you to all of the parents. However, as we thank our parents, we should remember to be happy with everything we do ourselves. Now this isn’t to say that our parents don’t know best, they are older and wiser than we are. And this isn’t to say that we shouldn’t please our parents, for all they have done, they really do deserve it. But these are our lives to live, and consequently our lives to make decisions in. Believe wholeheartedly in your actions, or do not act.

Be happy. Congratulations Class of 2014!