

## **2021 Student Commencement Speech**

### **Professional Studies at 11 am**

#### **Shania R. Berard of Methuen, AS: Elementary Education**

Thank you President Glenn for introducing me, and welcome classes of 2020 and 2021! Welcome family and friends, but most importantly, welcome students. With us today we have Education majors, Criminal Justice majors, Human Services majors, Early Childhood education majors and lastly, American Sign Language majors. We made it. We made it through one of the hardest years in history. I myself still can't believe that I am graduating college! I haven't even comprehended that I am making a speech. But here I am, and here we are, through it all.

College to me used to be a distant dream. Going to college was never imaginable and always out of reach. Being a first generation college student, I grew up thinking that you didn't need to go to college to get a job. I had the impression that college would only bring me into debt and also cause an insane amount of stress. Now that I am graduating from NECCO, I realize that these first impressions were just my fears of failing clouding my judgment. I decided to go to college for myself, my family but most importantly my students.

In 2019, I got the opportunity to start a new job at Little Sprouts Early Education and Care in Andover, as a teacher's assistant. I immediately felt at home

and knew that teaching was my calling, I was made for it. I ended up getting EEC certified and started working in a Kindergarten classroom. I wake up every day excited to go to work and hear all of the stories that my students tell me. I get excited to answer their never ending questions and see their faces light up when they read a sentence by themselves. I have learned a lot about myself in the last two years of being a Kindergarten teacher. Although my students have taught me an immense amount of lessons about who I am, I have also learned about my students, who they are, and their dreams. Elianni wants to become a flight attendant, Christina wants to work at her parent's restaurant, and Adryen wants to become a ninja. My students see me doing homework during naptime and are always confused when I tell them that I go to school too. Occasionally I will ask one my kids to write me a ten paged paper and they look at me and laugh. They say, "But Ms. Shania, I don't know how to write like a grownup!" and I look at them and think to myself that they are capable of so much. This year, My students have started to read by themselves and write sentences in their journals. They don't realize that reading and writing are the greatest accomplishments to have, as they rule the world. I have learned a numerous amount of lessons from my students and I want to share them with you today, as I think it's important to remind ourselves that children teach us the biggest lessons in life.

From Adryen I learn how much the words “I love you” mean and how far along a hug can go on a bad day. From Elianni I learn the importance of empathy and having a big heart. From Julius and Gaviel I learn that life needs a laugh track and that you can find something funny in every situation. I mean it when I say every situation. From Jenavive I learn to be unique, from Alexander I learn to never be afraid of asking questions and to always be curious. From Aliana I learn to be courageous. From Isabella I learn that happiness is found in small moments like your flower being the first to sprout or having pretzels for snack. From Karsen I learn that students LOVE to learn, and that learning new things is the best feeling in the world. From Leah I learn that being humble is important. From Siobhan I learn that you can be so much more than what people think. From Aubrey I learn to smile more. From Christina I learn the importance of family. And from Jonathan I learn that sometimes the quietest people are the ones that have the most to say.

My students are the number one motivator to finish school strong and determined. Today, I realize that all of us here are not education majors and that your motivation may be completely different from mine. However, along the way we can say that we had one thing in common; we graduated. We graduated even through the hardships, through all of our doubts, and the long nights where we had the question roaming in our heads of, “Is all this stress really worth it?” Look where we are now. We are *graduating college*. Let that sink in for a moment.

I like to remind my students every day that they are smart and capable of doing hard things, that they have so much knowledge that can change the world someday. I think it's time that we all take our own advice that we tell children. It's important for you to know that **you** are capable of hard things, that **you** are so incredibly smart and have so much knowledge that can make our world a brighter place. From this day forward, I hope you can take these lessons that I have learned from my students and let them guide you through your incredible journeys that are just starting. Go out and learn new things, try and try again but never let anything set you back. Learn from your setbacks, and grow into a new version of yourself. Become the person you needed when you were younger. And most importantly, listen to children and what big ideas they have, their message is important.

Thank You.