

*“I believe in karma what you give is what you get returned  
I believe you can't appreciate real love until you've been burned  
I believe the grass is no more greener on the other side  
I believe you don't know what you've got until you say goodbye”*

-Affirmation, by Savage Garden

It's funny how all year long, I could not wait to graduate. I was tired of school, tired of homework, and tired from waking up early. And, as I am sure most of you could agree, summer just could not come soon enough. Yet here we are, finally at graduation, and I keep reminiscing about the past thirteen years with all of you. We have all come such a long way, with each one of us now finishing our own unique journeys.

It's crazy to be standing here and thinking that we are finally graduating. For years, we've always known that we would graduate in the year 2019, but it has always seemed so distant, so far in the future. The song “Affirmation” by Savage Garden really does affirm our years in high school. It's a lesser-known song by a former Australian duo, but the four lines of the chorus really stood out to me.

It begins with the words “I believe in karma, what you give is what you get returned.” This was one of the earliest lessons we learned in school. For instance, if you study, you get a good grade. What you give is what you get returned. Class of 2019, I encourage you to keep this in mind as you continue your journeys after high school – whether it be college, a trade school, the workforce or any other path. With a mindset of dedication and perseverance, success is never out of reach. Remember that no one is perfect; we all make mistakes. This is why it is important to keep moving forward with a positive attitude. As Rocky Balboa said, “[Life's] not how hard you can hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward.” Use karma to your advantage and take control of your own life. Your destiny lies within your own hands.

The next line of the chorus says “I believe you can’t appreciate real love till you’ve been burned.” Everyone here has worked extremely hard to get to where they are today. Still, it could not have been done alone. A huge thank you goes out to everyone who has helped us thus far – the Penn Cambria teaching staff and administration, as well as friends and family. I want to personally thank both of my parents for always being supportive and always encouraging my ambitions throughout high school. Without you guys, I would not be standing here speaking today. Thank you. My fellow classmates, always remember: family keeps things in perspective. While friends may come and go, family is forever. Through them, we can truly appreciate real love.

The third line continues, “I believe the grass is no more greener on the other side.” Class of 2019, realize that the real world is a tough place. High school was only the beginning; the hard part has yet to come. As you move on with your lives, you must always appreciate your situation. There are always people out there who are struggling more than you; be grateful for the wonderful things life has to offer, and take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. We are all fortunate in our own ways, and we must not lose sight of the bigger picture. It is easy to get caught up on the small things; learn to work around the small challenges presented to you on a daily basis. With this in mind, maybe the grass *can* be greener.

Last but not least, we arrive at the fourth and final line of the chorus: “I believe you don’t know what you got until you say goodbye.” This line calls to mind the realization of what today really means... We are saying goodbye. We are graduating. Throughout your life, keep in mind the memories of high school, both good and bad. We will look back on these days for years to come; only then will we realize how many memories and stories we’ve created. While keeping the past in mind, we must also stay focused on the future. Each and every one of you have the potential to

achieve great things. Use your experience at Penn Cambria High School to continue the journey through life.

Class of 2019: I wish you great success in whatever you choose to do with the rest of your life.

Always remember to work hard, be thankful for your friends and family, take advantage of every opportunity, and remember the memories from Penn Cambria as you look towards the future. I have truly enjoyed becoming friends with so many of you over the years. This makes for a very difficult parting, but we are on to bigger and better things. Let us celebrate our achievements today, and once again: congratulations.