



Abiona Centre
For Infant & Early Mental Health

2025 Valedictorian Speech

Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I would like to welcome all of you. To our guests, parents who came here today, welcome. To my teachers and my fellow students and graduates, congratulations. We did it! Today we're all here gathering to celebrate our success.

3 years ago, I found out I was pregnant with stella. I was in KCI Kipling collegiate. I'm having second thoughts on keeping her because how hard life is and I was young. If I was to keep her, I don't know how or If I can do it by myself. I was scared, worried and confused. Luckily, I got help from my school counselor. They told me If I really want to keep her, there is a lot of help and support that I can receive. One day my school counselor asked me to go to the school office because there is something she wants to tell me. When I got there, she told me right away that she found three places that could help me. They explained what every place offers and Abiona is the best option and the place that I needed. They offer houses, daycare and school. Best thing is I don't need to travel. Everything is in one place which is great. In the 2 years that I've been here, I learned a lot. This is where I became a mother. I became a better person. I got my priorities straight. I got to have new friends. For me Abiona felt like home.

Getting here wasn't easy. For many of us this journey is really hard. Parenting, being a student and living on our own sometimes feels so impossible. I was young when I had stella. I knew it's going to be difficult but I was determined to give Stella a better future. I also want to set a good example or a good role model for her when she grows up. I want to show her that she can be whatever she wants in the world. For me, Stella is the reason why I'm here, she gave me the courage and confidence to stand up for us and to invest in my future. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for her, my family and Jeio. Their belief in me encourages me to do better and to be strong.

I also want to thank myself. I never gave up, even when life felt so dark. I believe that everything happens for a reason. I want to thank the Abiona centre, the staff for their support and warm welcome. I want to thank Tamara for accepting the call from my school the day I needed assisting. From Prenatal to postnatal staff, from the bottom of my heart thank you for being there for me and Stella. Also special thank you to my student counselor (Sophie and Jessica). You guys help me a lot. Through my pr, college application and many more from the bottom of my heart Thank you so much. To my teacher Ms Kadri, thank you for making my

English better and for making me understand every single word and every lesson that I can't understand.

Also, to my teacher Sir Karlos, thank you for the strategies that you gave me and pushing me to be better. Thank you for being more than just an educator—you've been a guide, a mentor, and a source of inspiration. Your patience, wisdom, and dedication have helped shape who I am today. You believed in me, even when I doubted myself, and that made all the difference. I promise I will carry the lessons you taught me far beyond the classroom. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to one of those who's been my number one support system. To my mom, my boyfriend, my sister and to my friends. I'm beyond grateful and blessed that you all have been part of my life throughout this journey. Thanks for always being there for me and for stella. Thank you for the love, support, and to make us happy and feel safe. No more words can express how thankful I am that I have all of you in our lives.

To my dad in heaven. Today, I graduate — a moment I've dreamed of and worked hard for. I wish you were here to see it, to give me a proud smile, a warm hug, and those words of encouragement I still long to hear. But even though you're not physically beside me, I feel your presence in every step I take. I carried your love, your sacrifices, and your dreams with me through every challenge. This diploma is not just mine — it's ours. There are no days that pass that I don't miss you. You will forever be in my heart daddy. I also want to thank God for giving me courage. I lost my close grandfather who is my dad's uncle in 2023. It was hard but I got through it. After that, I lost my dad and my uncle in the same year 2024 while having stella. It was the most heartbreaking year of my life. I couldn't go home to the burial. But after all this, I'm here standing strong in front of you as proof that everyone is going to face a challenge and some of these challenges are going to break you. Just remember to not give up. Stand strong and believe in yourself. Talk to those people who support you. And don't forget despite being a parent, a student, a worker to, give time for yourself. Always think that everything happens for a reason.

To end this speech, I want to give you a quote that inspires me.

1 Timothy 4:12 "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." Thank you for listening and Congratulations to everyone.