



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



Class of 2023

GRADUATION

JUNE 14, 2023 • BURLINGAME REC CENTER • 5:00PM-7:00PM
850 Burlingame Ave • Burlingame, CA



Isabel Che Andres
GRADUATION SPEAKER



Alexander Chun

Class of
2023



**Eamon Christopher
Kuehnle**



Dashiell King Meier



Olivia Grace Sandoval



Kazuo Uchihara



Maximilian J. Wolf



Tarek Maher Zabaneh



ISABEL ANDRES

Hello, my name is Isabel Andres and I am this year's speaker for the 2023 graduating seniors. I am here to speak on behalf of our class to say what Stanbridge meant for us over the years.

Stanbridge was like a garden. We were like tiny seedlings planted into the garden soil, waiting to bloom into a grand tree with its branches growing towards the sky. Stanbridge is a place where doors are open for us to step through. It was Stanbridge that gave us the support and confidence that we needed. To us, Stanbridge was like a second home thanks to the amazing atmosphere.

Not only was Stanbridge a garden and second home, but it was also a place where we could be ourselves and be appreciated for who we are. We supported each other had teachers that provided the stepping stones to our future. It was also our families that stepped in and helped along the way.

We started High School as Freshmen in Fall 2019, and it looked like we were off to a great start. It wasn't long till the shutdown of March 2020 when every school and workplace had to close, and we couldn't come to school. During that year and the next one, school had to be taught through Zoom.

For everyone, it was hard, but we managed to push through. To this downside, there was a bright side; we got to see everyone's pets and see a glimpse of their life.

Some of the experiences we'll remember most were the trip to Washington, DC, the Montara lighthouse, and Dillon Beach, where we kayaked, hiked, and saw some deer.

We also enjoyed many dances and Proms, including one online Prom, Turkey Bingo, and Bunny Bingo, and experiential weeks where we traveled by train, bus, and BART, planned and cooked a meal, and visited museums and fun places to play.

In the last few weeks, we have each had a chance to walk to Starbucks with Julia to talk with her about our hopes and dreams for next year. This was a truly special time for each of us because it allowed us time to be with our awesome advisor before graduating.

Soon we will leave this marvelous garden where we have grown our hopes and dreams. We will bring a bag full of unplanted saplings with us to create our own gardens for the future. So, thank you on behalf of the Class of 2023 to all the hard-working teachers and staff, and to our families for making these past years so much brighter and allowing us to achieve our dreams.



ISABEL ANDRES

Hello everyone my name is Isabel Andres. Before coming to Stanbridge for the eighth grade, I attended a school called The Laurel School located in San Francisco. I went there from fourth grade through seventh grade. At Laurel, I had a few friends that I would hang out with but it was hard to make friends because I was quiet and shy and would barely talk. Over time, I started to come out of my shell. By the time I was in the seventh grade, I wasn't so shy anymore and had some great friends that would be kind and fun to hang around with. However, my mom was looking for a school that would go up to high school without transferring to a new school. That's when she found Stanbridge Academy. So I gave Stanbridge a try and shadowed there for 2 days before the winter break. After those two days, I felt that Stanbridge would be a good choice for me because it had small classrooms and I would get more one on one time with the teachers.

When I first transferred to Stanbridge, I kind of went back to my old 4th-grade self. The same 4th grader who was shy and quiet, who would only talk if I being asked a question or being talked to. Other than that Stanbridge continued to help me to speak more clearly, and loudly and to be more confident in myself. Within the 5 years that I have been at Stanbridge, I have learned many more skills and gained more friends. I have met amazing and supportive teachers and students that helped me with skills that weren't easy for me to learn.

The teachers that I want to thank are some that I had from eighth grade up until my senior year at Stanbridge. I want to thank Daniel Geller for teaching me math in eighth grade and now for my final year at Stanbridge, Camille Jeraci for being my amazing art teacher, and Colleen McQuade for teaching me important skills that I will use beyond Stanbridge's doors. I would also like to thank Julia Pike for being my English teacher and my advisor this year. I want to thank my family for supporting me and always being there, especially, my grandmother who helped me attend some summer classes at Ringling College of Art and Design last summer to expand my art skills.

As I spread my wings after leaving Stanbridge, I am hoping to continue working on my art skills at the College of San Mateo. My goal right now is to continue my education and expand other important skills. Even so, I'll make sure to visit Stanbridge once in a while to see what has changed. With that said, for those that live too long, the friends of days gone by and scenes from their adventures live on in their memories. As such, I have no regrets about meeting you, friend. Should the day ever come that we are not together, you will continue to shine like gold in my memories. So thank you Stanbridge for helping me and guiding me every step of the way.



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



ALEXANDER CHUN

Hello everyone My name is Alexander Chun. Before I came to Stanbridge I was at Lowell Elementary School in San Jose in 2010. The reason why I chose Stanbridge is because it has less people and the building is smaller while my old school was too big. The first time I came to Stanbridge in 2014 I was surprised that I had never seen a school that had stairs at the entrance. When I first had classes at Stanbridge, my teachers were James Warren, Jeff Andrade, Teresa Calano and Jerrod Nelson. Eamon Kuehnle was one of my friends.

During my journey at Stanbridge, I learned how to take notes well and be more organized. I have learned from Social Learning how to be a better friend. I also improved at finding answers to questions that are related to a text we were reading.

My teachers have been very helpful over the years. I would like to thank Daniel Geller for helping me on Algebra 2 assignments when some of the questions were too hard to do on my own. I would like to thank Gladys Arana and Linda Bargas for helping me be an office assistant intern. Through their guidance I learned a lot about having a job.

After graduation my plans for the future are to get ready for college classes at College Internship Program in Berkeley CA. I would like to learn how to be better at organizing things, and keeping things clean in my apartment building. I would also like to have a job at a supermarket, like Safeway, Walmart or Target. Another job I might like to have is working at the Animal Shelter or as a park ranger in a national park such as Coyote Hills Regional Park, Yosemite or Yellowstone.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for providing me with a safe and supportive place to learn.



EAMON CHRISTOPHER KUEHNLE

It has been an absolute and tremendous joy since I began my life at Stanbridge Academy as a 2nd grader. Before that, I attended two public elementary schools in Half Moon Bay for 4 years. At Pre-K, they were fine schools for me at first, but by Kindergarten and 1st grade, it got very tough. Luckily, I had a chance to shadow at Stanbridge and my parents thought this school would be a good place for my disabilities. So I said, “Yes Ma & Pop. I can learn here. They will help me.”

I arrived at Stanbridge for the first time in summer 2012. During the first few months, my experience was off to a bumpy start. But by the wintertime, I was able to work hard, learn better, and improve my thoughts. Also, I learned how to make some new friends big-time. Even though everything was still unsettling during 3rd-6th grade, I had the ability to do my homework, turn assignments in on time, and get better grades.

By Junior High, I learned how to use a binder to keep control of my materials, and most times, I’ve been very organized. Despite my autistic challenges, I have learned a lot of new things on this campus.

Here’s a big thank you to all our students and staff. I would like to thank Lisa Parnello for helping me with my challenging needs in the beginning. Also to Liz Ko for teaching me skills in literature and Matt Juul for the greatest and dramatic algebra qualities. I appreciate Camille Geraci for being a fantastic art and yearbook crew advisor. To all of my best speech therapists including Tricia Keener, Kari Schaiman, and Kaitlin Thompson for showing me new tools for my feelings. A special thanks to Alexander Chun and Tarek Zabaneh for being good friends. And Dashiell Meier for helping me make the Going Green Program an interesting process. Finally, I would like to congratulate my mother for making the Stanbridge Parent Association a lifelong experience. Because I was so sweet, the entire campus, including the alumni and past graduates, loved me. You’ve all been great and courageous people.

As I begin my next mission, I will attend a full-year adventure at College Internship Program in Berkeley. There, I will take lots of new classes and make new friends during my journey. While at C.I.P, I will become an exceptional student and a heroic and independent person. Finally, I’ll make my way to receiving a bachelor’s degree by going to Berkeley City College because this might be a great school for me. Thanks for everything, Stanbridge Academy. I’ll miss you dearly.



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



DASHIELL KING MEIER

Today is the day of new beginnings and a time to reflect on how Stanbridge Academy brought out the best in us. And now, we look forward to a place to go beyond the horizon into our future.

My name is Dashiell Meier. I have a disability called Down syndrome. During my time at Stanbridge, I have loved all of my classes, and the teachers genuinely took a liking to me. I mean, who wouldn't? I love making films, and someday I will get a job at Pixar. I also enjoy drawing, painting, and animations.

I am a Self-advocate for people with disabilities, giving speeches to big crowds and groups about disability rights. I recently went to Washington DC.

It may seem that I just started High School, and I know it is crazy. But the truth is that my education has only just begun. When I first joined Stanbridge Academy, I was the first person with Down Syndrome to attend this school. I first joined a summer camp where I went Hiking, and I loved it! I also loved how everyone was welcoming, and I felt like I was part of a family because I have learned so much from my teachers, including more about myself.

I had a lot of great moments at Stanbridge Academy, like the dances and making lifelong friends. Just doing these events with my friends brought me the most joy because they mean so much to me. I have been able to explore what I am capable of and how far I can push myself beyond my limits.

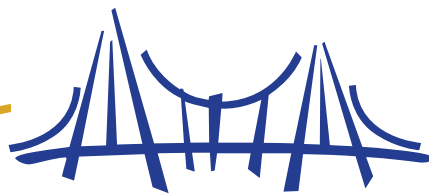
When I was younger, I struggled with math a lot because it was difficult for me, and I kept trying no matter how hard it was. Even when I got stuck, I had support from my teachers and parents who believed in me. And because of that, I learned a lot and I am very grateful to have them in my life.

I want to thank my friends, teachers, and family for being in my life and helping me be my best self. Thanks to everyone who has helped me over the years.

Stanbridge Academy is more than a place, Stanbridge Academy is the people. They believe that people with disabilities deserve to be in schools, but more importantly, Stanbridge is a community that believes that nobody can tell us what we can't do because of who we are. We are who we want to be; nobody can take that away from us.

After high school, I will make more films and sharpen my skills so I can work at Pixar someday as a voice actor, director, or storyboard artist.

Even if I have a disability, that does not mean I am not worthy of being a part of society. I am more than my disability because we are human, like all of you!



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



KAZIO UCHIHARA

Before I came to Stanbridge, I was at a school in San Francisco. I had trouble keeping up with assignments and I never found any of them interesting. In 2016, I joined Stanbridge just as my 5th grade winter break was coming to an end. When I arrived and started treating Stanbridge like it was actually my school, I immediately noticed how much easier it was for me to do my work.

In my time at Stanbridge, I have grown as a person, a helper, and a musician. As a person, I have grown from blending in on the sidelines to spending half my time interacting with my peers. I've developed a sense of humor and become more interested and talented in acting. As a helper, I have served in Student Government as a Representative from 2016 to 2021, and as Vice President from 2022 to 2023. As a musician, I've been more exposed to music I like, and I've learned to become more observant when I'm listening to music. I can play guitar and drums, and I want to learn how to do so many more things.

Matt Robidoux has taught me guitar. He's also helped me start learning drums. Working with Matt has helped me advance closer to the musician I want to become. Jay has run every science class I've been in my entire time in high school. We discussed things I already knew and talked about things I'd never heard of before. Matt Juul taught me how to have fun in math class. I want to thank Colleen for helping me prepare for life after high school.

My plan after graduation is to enroll in a music class at College of San Mateo and continue to intern at Stanbridge. My dream job is to be a professional musician and actor. I'd like to once again thank everyone at Stanbridge who has supported me during my time at this school and wish them all good luck.



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



OLIVIA GRACE SANDOVAL

The concept of growing up has always confused me. It starts in first grade, no more nap time after lunch, then chicken nuggets aren't shaped like dinosaurs. Then everyone gets tall and all of a sudden I have to wear a bra. Our coloring sheets turned to words and numbers, our playgrounds turned to parking lots.

It goes too quick, just yesterday I was 6 years old, making a muddy mess in the backyard with my sister, I blink and here we are, in this itchy cap and gown. 18 times around the sun and I'm proud of the person I've become. I'm proud my last time on a playground was just yesterday, I proudly believe in mermaids, I'm proud to have kept little me close throughout the years.

I believe we are a mosaic of everyone we've ever loved including these past versions of ourselves. I hold my head up high, because I've always admired my big sister's confidence. I take care of myself because of my first grade teacher, who used to brush my hair before

class. I love to see people laugh because of my grandpa dave, who would always read jokes books with me. I love bugs because I wanted to be next to my grandmother, as she was working in the garden.

One person, whose words can not describe how thankful I am for, Is my momma. She is my superhero. She works a full time chemist job, runs her own small business, and is a single mom raising 2 kids and 3 animals. Even with this busy lifestyle, she has never missed a T ball game, a birthday, or an off key performance. My moms love made me the person I am today. Yes she birthed me, but she is also the reason I wake up every morning. Dear mom, I have felt your unconditional love through every dumb joke, every peanut butter and jelly sandwich, every midnight phone call. Without you I would not be standing here today.

There are two other people who's lessons and ideas will stick with me throughout my life, especially when I have a classroom of my own. The past year I had the opportunity to intern in the elementary school. I was blessed to be mentored by Miss Adria and Miss Harriet. They are so dedicated to supporting their students. Every day their classroom is filled with so much acceptance and hope. They truly believe in helping each individual student find their path to succeed. You inspired me every day, and I have learned so much from. Thank you Miss Adria and Miss Harriet.

The future is not promised, But with however much time I have left I'd like to continue working with children. Every morning this past year that I spent in the kindergarten and third grade classroom, has been the highlight of my day. From my mentors, I have learned patience, structure, understanding, and support. From the kiddos, I have learned more about spiderman, mallards, ninjago, and pokemon than I ever could have Imagined.

I always knew teaching was the right path for me, but these kids showed me I couldn't imagine my life any other way. So much so that, I have spent a year of evenings in city college of san francisco taking classes, and am just months away from my early childhood education permit. I hope to continue my education, and one day open up my own alternative learning school.

I am grateful for the experiences at Stanbridge the past few years, and for my peers in the class of 2023. Good luck on the rest of your life with the adventures waiting for you. Can't wait to see how you change the world.



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



MAXIMILIAN J. WOLF

My ascension to this campus wasn't, under all circumstances, a walk in the park. But I've had to slowly take big steps to get here in the first place. As you all know, I came here last spring. After dealing with some rough issues with my old school district and a couple of gap years as a teenager, I've decided that Stanbridge would serve me well, and be better off here.

The atmosphere here is totally different compared to most of San Francisco's public schools. Almost everyone here would be on the side of my peers and I. The campus is much smaller and so are the classrooms. And I was more able to perform my academic duties here since we have smooth internet access and Google Classroom compared to during my previous school years. I've had a rough experience in my hometown's public schools, with hallmarks of bullying incidents and when I got here, everyone here is more civilized and everything is less chaotic.

I shall credit my classmate Eamon Kuehnle, and professionals Kenny Katz, Julia Pike, and Colleen McQuade for being on my side, standing up to the challenges we all faced together over the year. And I also credit my family who've believed in me, and I have confidence that this unforgettable event will celebrate my graduation from high school.

I express such gratitude for all of this. Today, I shall look forward to more freedom and opportunities for me to take advantage of and help enrich what's best for me in the next several years. I'd sure like to explore my entire home state of California myself, and be able to follow my passions that I'm deeply interested and invested in. My family, my peers and I are so grateful for reaching this milestone. I'm glad that I made it. Here's my statement for future high school seniors: don't give up, help yourself, figure it out, and gain strength as best as you can. And I wish you all the best. Stay strong and thanks, everyone!



STANBRIDGE ACADEMY



TAREK MAHER ZABANEH

Hello Stanbridge Academy. My name is Tarek Zabaneh. Before I went to Stanbridge Academy, I attended a school that was called Arbor Bay. When I was in 5th grade, I heard of Stanbridge Academy when one of my friends, Owen, decided to go there. My mom looked into the school and she liked it. When I first shadowed at Stanbridge, I thought I was not going to fit in or make any friends. I made friends and got along with the teachers and made more friends than I ever expected. Finally, when I came to Stanbridge I was bad at using scissors to cut things, but over the years I got better at it and I'm glad I kept practicing.

I have grown a lot at Stanbridge because I was really bad at math but my teachers, Lindsey Plume, Craig Siulinski and Matt Juul helped me a lot in math and made me good at math to this day. Ben Grigsby helped me on my times tables and helped me master multiplication. I also had a teacher named Teresa and she helped me with my reading. I had a hard time reading but she helped

me and I got better at it over time. When I first got to Stanbridge, I was really bad at basketball but Mark Kelley helped me get better at it. If I went to a public high school, I probably would have a hard time with the classes there because it's not one-on-one learning.

I would like to thank my PE teachers, Mark Kelley, Jeff Andrade and Taylor Ciatto because they encouraged me to play basketball for four years at Stanbridge Academy. This is an opportunity that I would have not gotten if I went to a public high school because in public high schools you have to make the cut for you to get a chance to play basketball. I would like to thank my parents for supporting me to go to Stanbridge Academy. I would also like to thank my friends at Stanbridge because they made me the person I am today and thank you guys for that.

My hopes and goals for the future are to pass my driver's permit test. After I pass that, I will have to pass my drivers test. I would like to get into a good college and earn a degree in business. I also want to get a good job so I can buy my own car. After I get my business degree, I want to own my own Coffee or Sandwich shop, which would make me very happy. Thank you Stanbridge for giving me an awesome 7 years and I will miss you dearly.



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**CONGRATULATIONS TO
ALL OF OUR GRADUATES**

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