

Max (Michelle) Zagorski's

VALEDICTORY SPEECH (ABRIDGED)



Max graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA and was named one of the Valedictorians of the CMASAS Class of 2025. She lives in Pittsburgh, PA, and will be attending the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) to pursue her passion for art and graphic design. While at CMASAS, Max dual-enrolled with SCAD for two years, earning placement on the Dean's Honor List and receiving both academic and achievement scholarships totaling over \$11,000 per year. She is also a proud member of our National Honor Society chapter. Max is not only a talented artist, she's a determined student who turned her creativity into a path forward.

"Before CMASAS, school felt like a battleground. I came home in tears almost every day, not because of academics, but because I felt unsafe, excluded, and misunderstood. I was bullied for who I was, and even my teacher treated me unfairly. I began to believe I didn't belong anywhere. But everything changed when I found CMASAS."

"Online learning gave me the space to heal, grow, and breathe. It removed me from a toxic environment and gave me back control—not just over my education, but over my well-being. I was no longer confined by rigid schedules. I could learn at my own pace, in a setting where I felt safe, supported, and seen. I was able to be present with loved ones, take care of myself, and still succeed. Education was no longer one-size-fits-all."

At CMASAS, learning was built around me, not a system. One of the most beautiful things about online school was how it brought me closer to my family. I could take breaks with my dog, share lunch with my parents, and even be present during important moments—like visiting my mom in the hospital—without falling behind. I never had to choose between school and love. Online learning gave me both."



"THANKS TO CMASAS, I'M NOT JUST GRADUATING, I'M STEPPING CONFIDENTLY INTO THE FUTURE."

"People often assume that online school is isolating or academically weak. But that couldn't be further from the truth. I learned how to manage my time, advocate for myself, think critically, and grow emotionally. In fact, research shows online learning can actually boost retention and reduce learning time because it meets students where they are."

I was able to move ahead a full grade level in math, raise my English level by two grades in a few short months, and most importantly rebuild my confidence. This didn't happen because I was a genius—it happened because I was finally given the space to thrive."

"I made real friends here. I joined communities where I felt accepted and supported. Adults often tell me how mature and grounded I am and they're surprised when I tell them I've attended online school. But I tell them, 'That's not despite it. That's because of it.'"

This school has given me safety, strength, and the ability to chart my own path. It's shown me that a different kind of education is not only possible—it's powerful."

