

Good evening!

Thank you Ms. Bowman, for the kind introduction. On behalf of the governing board and the faculty, staff and leadership team at the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, it is my honor and privilege to welcome you to the 25th anniversary celebration of the Townes award. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and commitment to the cause of excellence in education for the State of South Carolina. Before I continue, please join me in recognizing Emeritus President Murray Brockman, who is here this evening with his wife Bene, for his extraordinary service to GSSM.

I joined this remarkable community of teachers and learners nearly a year ago. In that short time, I have learned that the potential of GSSM to transform the lives of young people and for the advancement of our state is nearly unlimited. As President, it is both my challenge and my privilege to help our school imagine its next decade of service and its third era of excellence as an international leader in STEM education.

As some of you may know, the school's leadership and faculty are developing a strategic vision for GSSM's next decade that we call GSSM 3.0. I look forward to sharing the details of GSSM 3.0 right here, next year.

In a work about plants published after his death, Henry David Thoreau wrote: " ...I have faith in a seed. Show me a seed and I am to expect wonders."

Three weeks ago, I met Sofia Elias, a 5 year old from Hartsville, one of about 300 children who attended the first public open house held on our campus, Inside GSSM. I remember her smiling at me while having a beautiful young snake draped over her shoulders at a biology exhibit. It is both fascinating and inspiring that as Sofia was connecting with another living being that is usually associated with danger or evil, she was also making sense of her new friend, cautiously and purposefully, she was starting to ask questions, she was trying to understand, and she was having fun in the process. Joy, curiosity and empathy make the core of a scientific mind, and Sofia was fully using them while engaging with her snake friend. How many more seeds of wonder are out there in our State, and how can we help them germinate, grow and blossom, with the proper intellectual soil, water, and light, with a measure of care, love, and humanity? Excellent seeds, like Sofia, grow into seedlings of greater excellence, as we see in our 261 residential and 116 Accelerate students, and exemplified by GSSM Senior Kaitlyn Baldizzi, a wonderful student from Lake Wylie who won the 2017 State award from the National Center for Women in Information Technology. How do we uphold our collective responsibility to seek and enable excellence, and have our GSSM students grow into wonders of intellect, curiosity, resilience, and character? Those who we honor this evening, Ambassador Haley and

the South Carolina Department of Commerce, lead us on this quest, through inspiration and example.

It is an honor to work with an extraordinary group of partners throughout the state, from the General Assembly to the Governor, educators, parents, alumni, businesses, community friends, and the GSSM Foundation. We look forward to engaging with all of you this evening, sharing our quest for continuous excellence, national recognition, opportunity and inclusion for all deserving students in South Carolina. Through our Townes award recipients, we also celebrate the seeds for a hopeful future. Thank you!

Dr. Hector E. Flores – President

GSSM

Remarks at Townes Awards Event, Columbia S.C., March 15, 2017



