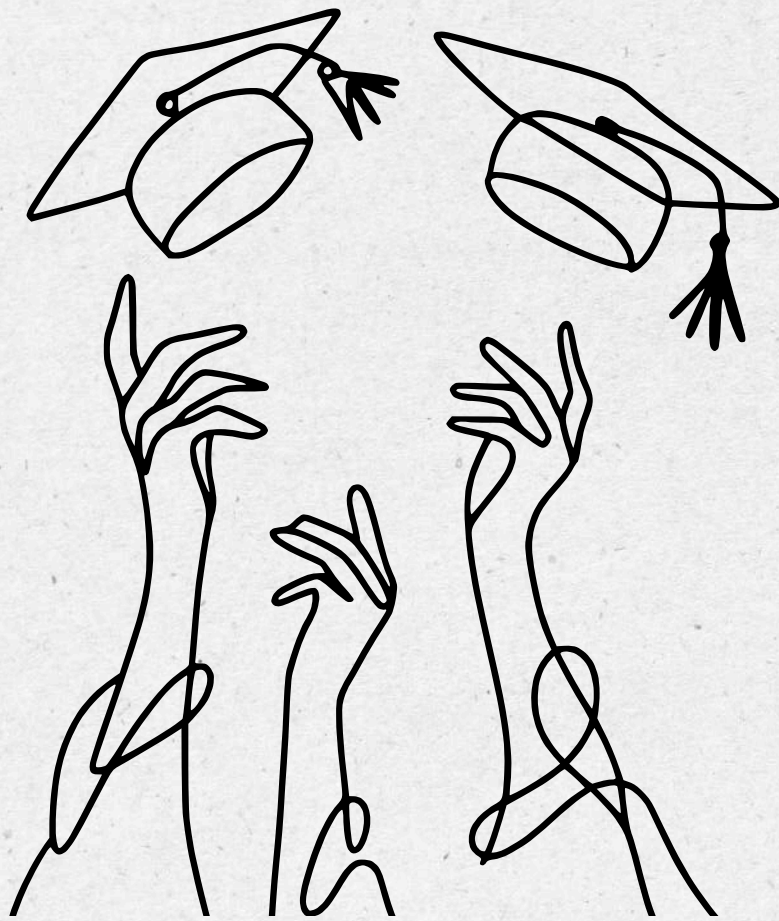


# KALEIDOSCOPE

ENNIO KENT RAAYA MILO IOANA MOKSHA DURGA IAM



*Graduation!*

8 kids share about their journey in Deepanam

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# TEENS CONNECT

APRIL 2026

EPISODE 19

## IN CONVERSAION WITH FLEUR



HOSTED BY RAAYA AND UDAY  
Hope and Faith group's monthly  
podcast

In Episode 19 of Teens Connect, student hosts Raaya and Uday interview Fleur, a dance teacher at Deepanam School .

### Early Beginnings in Dance

Fleur began dancing at age five in France, starting with Western classical ballet as an extracurricular activity. Despite not fitting the stereotypical ballet physique — tall and slender — her teachers encouraged her to explore modern jazz and contemporary dance, helping her find confidence in her own strengths.

### Schooling in France vs. Deepanam

French schooling ran long hours (8 AM to 6 PM) and was heavily academic, with arts and sports occupying very little time. Specialised schools offered more balance, incorporating dance, theatre, and music into the weekly schedule. By contrast, Deepanam's open campus and community-oriented environment stood out as markedly different.

### A Wide-Ranging Artistic Education

Rather than specialising exclusively in dance, Fleur pursued scientific studies in high school to keep her future options open. This intellectual curiosity carried over into her dance practice — she studied Western classical ballet, classical Thai dance, Bharatanatyam, African traditional dances, and styles from across Europe and Asia. She came to value the freedom of traditional and contemporary forms after years of the precision demanded by classical dance.

### How She Came to India

Fleur originally intended to do her fifth-year medical internship in Senegal, but a friend's wish to visit India redirected her plans. Arriving in Pondicherry alone, she met the Health Minister, completed her internship at a government hospital, and fell deeply in love with the city and with Bharatanatyam. What began as a gap year extended into a permanent new life. In 2011, she opened a cultural centre in Pondicherry, which continues to run today.

### Dance Over Medicine

After years of medical studies, Fleur chose to follow dance full-time — viewing movement and physical awareness as, in her words, a form of healing in itself, and therefore not entirely separate from medicine.

### Teaching at Deepanam

Fleur joined Deepanam three years ago when her daughter enrolled. What started as volunteering for end-of-year choreography grew into regular classes for all age groups. She values working with children for their open-mindedness, creativity, and willingness to improvise — qualities she believes adults often lose over time.

### A Memorable Stage Moment

Fleur recalled a national dance competition in France where she performed a trio choreography. Though they did not win, the three performers resolved simply to enjoy themselves on stage — and when everything fell perfectly into place in that moment, it became one of her most cherished memories.

<https://www.aurovillerradiotv.org/episodes/teens-connect-ep-19>

# DEAR GRADUATES

Dear Durga, Ennio, Iam, Ioana, Kent, Milo, Moksha, Raaya,

I welcome you all this evening—a moment that marks the end of your middle school journey and the beginning of new possibilities ahead.

I have been thinking about this group... about this year... about moments of creative brilliance, collective achievement, and yes, also moments of boredom and anxiety that all of us experienced.

The year began with a wonderful Back-to-School one-week program. It created a vibrant start, bringing focus to teamwork, self-discovery, and connection. The cycling trip was truly memorable. For many of you, it was the first opportunity to interact deeply with each other—building a sense of excitement and belonging.

What stood out most for me was when we came together and began to question ourselves. Through inquiry and conversation, we explored ideas of friendship, belonging, beauty, judgement—and above all, we asked a fundamental question:

What is the point of learning? What does it mean to be educated? That question is not easy to answer.

Soon, many of you will step more fully into the world beyond school. You may already have some idea of what that world looks like—from what you see and hear. It is not always an easy world. There is conflict, confusion, wars, and uncertainty. But I believe the education and experience you have had in Auroville gives you something valuable—not just knowledge, but the ability to think, to question, and to respond with awareness and goodwill.

When I look back at the year, I see what we have created together: Publishing Kaleidoscope month after month—despite the challenges of deadlines. Podcasts with some amazing people. Attempting NaNoWriMo. Memorable cycling trips. And of course, the icing on the cake—your performance of Haroun and the Sea of Stories.

What I remember most is not just the final performance, but the process—the rehearsals, the effort, the moments of doubt, and the willingness to keep going. You discovered that hard work pays off. That nervousness can be managed. That confidence can be built.

And then, that moment—standing on stage, hearing the applause. As one of you said so simply: “I never heard claps so loud.” That sound will stay with you for a long time. Looking ahead—you are now moving into high school.

And so I want to return to learning. My aim has always been to give you tools for learning—to create an environment that encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and exploration, rather than conformity, grades, or compliance. To take responsibility for your learning.



Because real learning cannot happen when it is forced, or driven by fear of exams or outcomes. It is about discovering something deeper. For some of you, it may be art. For some, science. For some, working with people. For some, something you don't yet know. And that's okay. You don't have to have everything figured out. What matters is this: When you find something that feels true—something that challenges you, something that helps you grow, stay with it. Quoting Steve Jobs here “Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.”

The book you are receiving today is about a seagull who wanted to learn to fly—not just to survive, but to understand what he was truly capable of. And in some way, that is my wish for you. Not just to go through life— but to discover your own way of flying.

I will leave you with a few simple thoughts:

- Keep your curiosity alive.
- Keep questioning.
- Keep creating.
- Be kind—to others, and to yourself.

And wherever you go from here— find your own way of flying.

I gave my best what I could ... and I hope something from it stays with you—maybe even more than just the homework.

Thank you—for this year, for your energy, for your honesty, and for everything you have brought into this space.

Love you all.

*Mahavir*



IAM

I've been in Deepanam for two years and in these two years i've learnt more then I can count .

I joined in 2024 January 5th .When I joined fitting in wasn't the problem since most of the class I knew from outside the school. The problem I had when I joined was the thought of failing ; being lost in everything we did .For the first few weeks that was pretty much the case but I had my friends.They help me understand more which helped a lot , and one of the friends that helped me the most was Ziv my best friend since we joined in the same time we helped each other through the process until we were both comfortable with learning like everybody else.

In my first year I had my first ever school play with Deepanam , which was fun. I had a pretty small role but I had a great time. I also had my first ever school trip with Deepanam which was so good and is probably a memory that I'll never forget.

In my second year I had a lot more pressure since we were the oldest grade and sadly i didnt have ziv to be there with me for our last year since he moved away but that was ok cause i built pretty good and healthy relationships with most of the people in deepanam and because in our first week we had this connection tree where we learnt about each other and that really helped me know my new class way better which helped me make new friends and just have a better year in general.

This year I built new relationships, learnt so many new things and had my second play which even though I had a way bigger role I enjoyed the last one better and a trip where we went to the same place did basically the same things in my opinion it was worse then last years. I can't believe how many great experiences I've had and it's been a pleasure being here. These years have obviously had their highs and lows but there are definitely way more highs. I really appreciate all the teachers' work and effort, especially Mahavir and Bhakti. And I would wish any kid the same beautiful, and fun year like I did. Thank you

# IOANA



I have been studying in deepanam for one and half years only but I made many memories.

Deepanam is a school but very different from the other schools I have been studying in Europe. I think that deepanam is a place to learn but a place of freedom . No one is gonna force you to do something but the teacher will always softly push you to the best of yourself .And that's exactly what I really like about this school.

I was happy when breaks came but i was always happy to come backto school and see my friends and my teachers.

We went to Yercaud two times and that was one of the best memories I made. We also worked on our acting skills. As you like it and Haroun and the sea of stories were the two plays I acted in.

Aurevan and mahavir helped me and my classmates to make the plays be as good as we could and, it was incredible to see our efforts finally pay.

A uge thank you to Mahavir and all my class mates who made this one and half year amazing and rememberable.

Ioana

# MILO

I joined Deepanam in 6th grade. I already knew some kids so I wasn't worried that I wouldn't fit in. The teachers were really nice too.

In 6th grade I was the best builder in the Egyptian play. It was cool and I was a little nervous since it was my first play in front of a lot of people, but it went great in the end.

After the play we went to Kalvarin hills. It was so cool and we swam in water falls

Then in 7th grade it was a whole new group so it was a bit different but we made it work and then it was the big play and I was really nervous because there was so many people then for our big trip we went to Yercaud. We went boating and saw an awesome sunset. Watching the 8th graders graduate made me realize we were next but I didn't realise how close it was.

In 8th grade I was a mechanical bird in our last play. The costumes were really funny and practice was tiring, but the play turned out good.

Now we're graduating. I'm excited but also sad. I'll miss Deepanam a lot. The plays, trips, and friends gave me some of the best memories

*Milo*





# DURGA

I have been in Auroville for 9 months. I joined Auroville in October last year. My experience in deepanam was really funny and cool. The classes I liked most were ATB and clay. In ATB, I learned to concentrate with my body and mind, and in clay I learned to make different shapes and sculptures. I spent 6 months in the play Haroun and the Sea of Stories, and every day we had 2 hours of play practice in the mornings and sometimes in the afternoons, and also we went to Bharath Nivas to take the props and free store to take some costumes. We went for a class trip, we stayed in Yercaud for 3 days, it was 5 hours on the bus, when we reached there, we left our stuff in a hotel, and we went for a walk, we went to the big lake for boating, we were 4 people, our boat looked good, but in the middle of the way, the boat stopped, we called for help, a guy came and helped us, after we went to the hotel, and spent the whole day there, coming back to deepanam, i do not have so much to say, because i did not spend so much time in the school, like years and all, and its crazy to think that It will be my first and my last year at the same time, i really enjoyed, i made new friends, i will remember Mahavir forever, for his support i can only thank him, and, i am feeling a little bit sad and happy at the same time, because i am moving to high school when i went to take the prrops to Bharath nivas and free store it was so sunny and we took only what we need not anything else

*Durga*

# RAAYA



Hello, my name is Raaya for the last 3 years I've attended Deepanam. It was my first experience of what school is, and it sure didn't disappoint.

I remember my trial day in 5th grade. I knew a few people and I clung to them. I noticed how at home so many people seemed happy and at ease everybody looked.

In my first year I spent so much time caught up in trying to figure out where I fit in and what type of person I was. 5th grade was a bit too easy so I asked to be moved to 6th grade and I was, the rest of the year I had so many good and bad experiences but now it all seems like a blur.

The 7th grade rolled around and it was an amazing year and I had an amazing time. I never really felt the requirement to act or put up a front. I made new friends, I focused on my studies and It was a really good year.

I still remember in the summer before 8th grade, searching every corner for my homework days before summer holidays come to end. It felt like it was just yesterday I was stressing about our new classmates. We had a lot more responsibility than last year... And I didn't handle it well. I was behind on every subject, had multiple pending assignments and was just out of it. Academicsecs were never really a problem for me, and then everything just piled on me, getting sick, trying to do sports, figuring out my head, and trying to focus again. There was nothing in particular I really regret other than what happened on our class on the trip last year, where we got into a fight over a banana.

The first week of 8th, we had our new classmates. I was worried if we would get along and what type of personalities they would have. But after the first week we had settled in, and I can say I am good terms with everybody in my class.

In the last month of school, it really started to dawn on me that these circumstances would never repeat again.

I am forever grateful to the teachers. For supporting me and turning my bad days into good ones. There are some decisions in foresight you regret and at Deepanam ive had some but coming to deepanam is not one of them. I'd like to acknowledge my class teachers Mahavir Bhakti Shallini and Narmadha for doing their best and pushing me to do mine. thank you everyone who came here tonight and all those who have supported me that I have not named.

*Raaya*



# ENNIO



I have been in deepanam for 9 years, and I've had lots of ups and downs, bad memories, good memories, you name it. But I wouldn't be able to have any memories without my friends and teachers. But I'm kind of glad for the bad memories I had. Because if it weren't for them I wouldn't have any good memories. Without bad encounters with people, you wouldn't be able to act better the next time you see them. If you messed up on a project, the next time you do it you'll learn from your own mistakes. I've made "lots" of mistakes throughout my years, and I have learned from almost all of them.

And the people who helped me through these bad memories I am truly thankful for. Without my best friend Kent, I probably would have not been funny or introduced to the video games I currently play. If it weren't for Kirill I probably would not have been inspired to draw at all. If it weren't for Raaya, I probably wouldn't have been able to socialize with others. And if it weren't for Shaalani, I would not have had a good experience during my most troublesome years. And I thank all of my friends who I am still friends with, all of those who are now in transition or somewhere else. And also thank you Mahavir and Bakti. The reason why I chose Deepanam instead of any other schools, transition, ect. It is because Deepanam, you have more control, and you have your own responsibility, to help yourself, and to help others. Deepanam has been my school for half of my life, and as I am leaving it feels like a fever dream. All of these years have passed, and yet it was so quick. I guess as you get older, life gets shorter, or something like that. Time flies when you're having fun as my mother said. I guess that is why this year felt so short. Once you start having fun in school, it gets easier. But if you stress yourself, demotivate yourself. You will only be able to think that, and life gets longer the more you complain or stress about it.

Deepanam is an experience I hope anyone gets to have. As it builds who you are, who you want or aspire to be. Creativity is needed here, and if you can bring it, you can discover more about yourself than you already know. If you really want to try hard in maths, english, there will always be teachers there to help. If not, here in Auroville is a good place to start finding tutors, if you have any struggles.

My experience in Deepanam is not that much different from many others who have been here before me. Lots of people go through the same things, some might even have exact lives. But we don't delve into the personal lives of people, it is how they are affected by their school experience, and personal home experience. If someone has a perfect life at home, they might not have that exact same life at school. If they don't have a perfect life at home, they might have a better life at school. There are endless possibilities of people's lives between school and home. Home and school are not in one life, they are two separate lives that affect the person in different ways.

*Ennio*



# KENT

I back; current times.

Known to live with others like life in a different world, are eyes can't stop to process the new environment that's shown.

Wake up, me as I wonder "is it time already?..."  
When it's time for school. Are you still sleepy?

It's question to answer, not to wonder?  
As I think it over,  
My question are to answer when I wonder,  
thank you very much!  
Is it that you question to think or answer  
when you understand it. "Yes; yes."

Very well then

Why am I still to wonder at a house where  
I'm questioning to answer these questions  
when these questions can't be a question if  
it's not something to answer...

Are you still at school?\*

Graduated as I'm now.

Kent



# MOKSHA

I have been studying in Deepanam since 6 years. My experience in this school — to be honest, I love it. I made new friends, and every day it's a new funny challenge.

The part I liked most was the activities and the teachers. It is something hard to explain, but teachers here are kind and they help us when I struggle. I don't even feel that they are teachers — I feel they are someone that you will have memories with. I have never seen teachers like this in other schools.

Thank you, Mahavir, for being an awesome teacher.

We have different types of classes, of course. But the class I most enjoyed in subjects was Math, and in activities it was ATB, because we did so many new games, and all the teachers behave so kind.

The best thing I enjoyed was the big play that we did in 7th and 8th grade. In 7th we did the play called As You Like It, and in 8th grade we did Haroun and the Sea of Stories. It was so good to do the play with the whole class.

## The Trip

Also, the trip that we went on in 7th grade to Yercaud for 3 days in April — 5 hours of travelling from Auroville. We also have freedom in most of the classes.

## Friends

And good friends and classmates — and to be honest, the activities are so good.



# LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM:

## Students Reflect on Their Internship Journeys

What does real-world work feel like to a teenager?

For the Hope Group students at Deepanam School, the answer is a colourful mix of boredom, breakthroughs, sore wrists, free lunches, and unexpected self-discovery. In a candid group conversation, eight students — Raaya, Ennio, Milo, Ioana, Durga, Yam, Moksha, and Kent — opened up about their internship experiences across a range of Auroville units and community spaces.

### Where They Went

The students interned at a diverse set of places across Auroville and Pondicherry. Yam spent time at Mason & Co., Marc's Café, and MatriMandir. Raaya worked with Inside India and Youth Link. Milo interned at Kalilay (a surfing school) for the entire year. Others split their time between units like Hibiscus Heroes, the PTDC (Auroville community store), Naturallement restaurant. Several students chose their placements based on personal interest — Milo for surfing, Durga and Ioana for craft and gardening — while others, by their own admission, simply followed a friend or picked whatever spot was still available.

### What They Actually Did

The day-to-day reality of internship work, the students discovered, is often more repetitive than glamorous. Yam spent three months folding boxes at Mason & Co. — "I'm not even joking," he said flatly — though he later got to make coffee for customers at Marc's Café, which he described as genuinely exciting. At the PTDC, students found themselves peeling garlic, packing shelves, and sealing packets on a scale. At Hibiscus Heroes, several students helped cut fabric, make jewellery, or press flowers — though Durga described the experience with dramatic flair, recounting how the physical strain of cutting stiff fabric with heavy scissors, in a dusty room, left her wrists hurting and her lungs struggling.

By contrast, some students landed what they cheerfully called the "best internships." Milo learned water safety, surfboard repair and shaping, and how to lead surf lessons — and noted with a grin that while everyone else sweltered in the heat, he spent his days in the ocean. At Matrimandir, students described a near-meditative experience — sitting by the petals, watching visitors, and simply being still. "I learned how to be more calm with myself," said one student. "Matrimandir was much more peaceful than home."

### Skills Gained

Despite the occasional monotony, the students articulated a surprisingly rich set of takeaways. Raaya learned professional email language and event coordination through Inside India's festival and workshop operations. Milo became a qualified surf instructor. Ioana learned how to engage strangers as customers at Marc's Café — a significant step for someone who described herself as naturally reserved. Others picked up flower pressing, jewellery making, composting and weeding, Excel spreadsheets, soundboard operation, and coffee preparation. One student summarised it well: "In normal language you say 'how much does this cost?' — but in a workplace, there's a whole other language to learn."

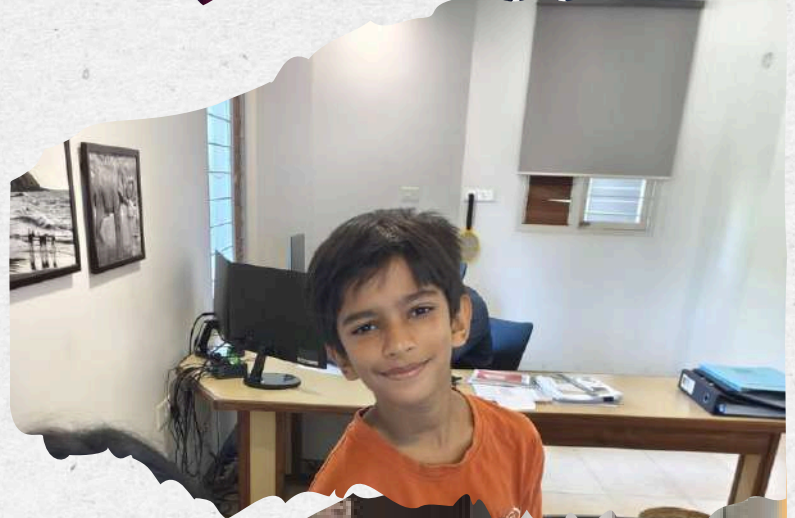
Awkward Moments and Real Challenges  
No internship is without its stumbles. One student accidentally ate from the customer buffet on her first day at Naturellementt, thinking the meal was for staff. Another managed to crash the soundboard mid-performance in front of over a hundred people. At Kasha, Milo encountered something far more serious — beach drowning incidents — navigating the instinct to help against the reality of not being certified. These moments, uncomfortable as they were, stood out as some of the most memorable and instructive.

#### Would They Do It Again?

When asked if they would repeat their Deepanam experience, the responses were entertainingly honest. Some said yes without hesitation. Others said they'd do it very differently — "I'd bet on the stock market so much more," one student quipped. Most agreed that the internships, however imperfect, gave them a genuine taste of working life — patience, communication, physical labour, and the quiet satisfaction of showing up and doing something real.

For these students, the classroom may have taught them how to think. But the internship, in all its unglamorous, occasionally painful, sometimes blissful reality, taught them something harder to measure: how to be in the world.

Based on a recorded group conversation with Hope Group students, Deepanam School, Auroville.



## ADITI

This year went by really quick. It was also one of the best school years I've had so far. One reason was the Hope groupers. Most of them at least.

When I joined I was first scared because I didn't really know anybody.

Then I got to know them and we became close.

I've known most of them but I feel like we all made new connections especially this year. Towards the end of the year they felt like family. Like we had known each other since we were tiny.

I can't believe that they're going to graduate and I also don't want them to but I'm happy for them. So we all decided, (together of course) that at least once a month we would hang out. Hopefully they don't think that they're too cool to hang out with us. I'll really miss, like a lot a lot. But I know we'll ALWAYS stay friends no matter what. And I hope they have an amazing year and future.

:)

## LEONI

Spending the year with the Hope group was a great experience, it was fun, loud, and chaotic, but we were all friends and we had so much fun, I especially liked the trips or events with them because it showed our teamwork and friendship, and in general all of them are so nice and sweet...except Raaya...but he's cool so that's a point.

And the Hope groupers are also amazing people, and they work hard and smart, and always manage to make our day, I'm sure the whole Faith group is really glad to have them as friends and classmates, and even if all of us don't always talk, we always find a way to work together, and spend time together, like arts, or during the play we were all very close, and I think it made some friendships stronger.

Anyway, I'll miss the Hope groupers a lot, and I'm sure a lot of kids will, because they're all so great, and I really hope they have fun in high-school, and I wish them all the best.



# I WILL MISS YOU HOPE GROUPERS - UDAY

This year, the Hope groupers played a really important role in my life, more than I expected at the beginning. From the very start, they were friendly, easy-going, and kind to me, which made a huge difference. Joining school was kind of overwhelming, but their attitude made it so much easier for me to settle in and feel comfortable.

At the beginning of the year, Milo was the only person I really knew. That one connection turned out to be the starting point for everything. Through Milo, I slowly got to know Raaya, Yam, Ennio, and Kent. What started as knowing just one person quickly turned into being part of a whole group. Spending time together played a big role in strengthening those bonds.

Whether it was during football, activities, casual conversations, or just random moments, we created memories that made our friendship stronger. These friendships made my overall experience so much more enjoyable. They gave me something to look forward to, made everyday moments more fun, and helped me feel like I belonged. They weren't perfect. There were times when they were annoying, irresponsible, or just a bit too much. But honestly, those moments are also part of what made our friendship real.

In the end, I'm really grateful for how these friendships turned out and the impact they've had on me throughout the year. As the year comes to an end, it's hard to think about not seeing them as often. I know I'll miss them, but I'll also carry these memories and friendships with me for a long time.





ALL THE BEST!