**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LORRIE BLITCH**

Hello everyone and thank you for being here to honor and support the 2021 graduating class of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School. To parents, teachers, friends, family, colleagues, staff, and of course, our most distinguished guests, our students, I want to thank each one of you for being here.... for showing up... in every sense of the phrase, and for supporting the mission of this school and the meaning of getting a solid, well rounded, traditional and focused education. As we look back on the past year, one that very few people could have, or would have, predicted, we emerge with many thoughts based on both personal and practical experience. I know that now, more than ever, I see and believe, just how critical a well rounded, supportive foundation is. I see how, at the base of that foundation, in order for it to be strong, to hold up those load bearing walls of future challenges and unexpected circumstances, a comprehensive, traditional, sustainable and practical education is our best hope for survival through whatever may come our way. The Ancient Greek philosopher, Diogenes said, “The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.” We, here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School are so fortunate and blessed to have the privilege to work with children at the youngest possible ages. We have the honor to guide them... to place them on the path as they begin the journey of receiving a formal education and an enduring, lifelong curiosity to always seek the truth, based on history, experience, and respect, that have always been the cornerstones of quality education.

Each one of us has gone through many challenges throughout our lives.... some bigger... some smaller, but no less valuable from a learning standpoint, but these past several months have been a master class in awareness, survival, adaptability, and resolve. Here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School, naturally, our focus has always been, and will continue to be, the welfare, safety, and enrichment of our students and staff. While the first months of the pandemic brought more questions than answers, after a while, as things settled.... somewhat, we were able to begin to observe the impact of conditions on our students. We also began to research and formulate the best and safest practices to bring the students back for in person learning. There is so much more to “school.” There are many benefits to in person learning and it’s very clear, with safety the main consideration, that kids need and crave an in person experience. Now is the time that their social, educational, and recreational skill sets are formed. Now is the time that these young children need to experience community... being in groups of their peers, learning to function, self express, and interact, learning to honor their own individuality while respecting the uniqueness of their classmates, and, of course, beginning to appreciate the priceless value in a traditional, fundamental, and well rounded education.

In an article published by Baylor College of Medicine in 2020, it states, “School is about much more than education. Interacting with peers is important for social and emotional development. .... Without in-person interaction, it becomes exponentially more difficult to identify learning delays, mental health issues, and other challenges.... Teachers saw previously excelling students lose skills that they worked so hard to learn.” The article goes on to state that the American Academy of Pediatrics released guidance on reopening schools.... stating that they strongly advocate for students to be physically present in school.” Non-attendance in school, even at the tender ages of our students, has the potential to wreak havoc on every aspect of their development, which, in turn, will have a detrimental effect on the future of our families, our communities, and our precious country.

It was James Madison who said, “Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power that knowledge gives.” Our forefathers spent a great deal of time and thought into building the path and constructing the framework that has served us and guided us for almost 250 years. Through practice and respect for the United States Constitution, our Armed Forces, and our incredible, rich history, we have learned to function in an increasingly complicated environment, but we must never lose sight of the fact that the values we have learned, and that we now teach, have survived and enriched our country for years. Our graduates may be the youngest of the young, but they deserve to have the chance to enrich themselves, their lives, and their futures by having a fundamentally sound, traditional education. It’s what made all of us.... now it’s time to hold fast and share the legacy so that their future is secured.

While what I’ve stated today may seem like a lot to instill on our youngest citizens, I think you’d agree that one is never too young to begin building a thoughtful, informed, considerate future. We have seen what happens to countries in which the citizens have been indoctrinated to believe less than the truth.

As you, our students go forward today, I wish you you all a happy, joyous celebration!!! I wish for you that your curiosity and thirst for knowledge continue to grow, your abilities to work with, and play with, your peers, continues to bring you joy while expanding your skills and talents, and may you all look back at your time here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with affection and admiration for who you met and what you learned.... I'm confident that many of you will hopefully be friends throughout life...may you continue to learn from each other!!! Thank you all!!