**15302, Cosmo Terrigno – 10 minutes, Due April 9**

Good Afternoon Everyone,

As headmaster of this private-independent elementary school, I first want to welcome our graduates and their parents and other relatives, since this ceremony is to celebrate their accomplishments thus far in life and what they can look forward to in the future. I’d also like to welcome our board members, our benefactors, and our alumni, faculty, and staff to today’s ceremony. This is a very important day in your lives, one that you have worked very hard to reach. We stand here today, on the porch of Ivy Manor, just as many other graduating classes have stood before today. This place has stood strong for our students since the 19th century and will continue to stand strong for many more years.

Today you have completed every requirement to graduate from the 8th grade and you are now ready to face the challenges and excitement of high school. You have faced many challenges and discovered much about yourselves during your journeys. We are proud of each and every one of you and you can be certain that we will follow your journeys as you continue to grow and learn in this next season of your lives. We have confidence that each of you will continue to learn and grow and show yourselves more than capable to excel in whatever field you choose to study in school and later in life.

This graduating class has shared unparalleled opportunities to grow and learn with one another. You experienced your first overnight trip in the 5th grade on the trip to Fairview Lake Camp. You shared a recent trip to Williamsburg, the last trip as a class where you made many memories. While on this trip, you learned much about yourselves and your friends that you couldn’t have learned in a typical classroom setting. As a matter of fact, with every experience of this type you learned many new things.

This class has a reputation for being full of antics. You are diverse in your interests, yet you accept one another just as you are. That is something most adults could learn from you. As you experience more of the world you will discover that most human beings have difficulty accepting anyone who is different from themselves. Sometimes they might ignore those who are different, sometimes they might try to change the other person, and sometimes they might try to attack those who are different. But, you have shown great maturity in accepting each other without debate or challenge. That is a unique characteristic that I hope you will continue to nurture in yourselves as you grow up.

You have proven yourselves to be wonderful nurturers to your little brothers and sisters in kindergarten. Not all older siblings treat their younger siblings with such care. You are truly setting a wonderful example not only for them but for other students as you move up in school. I hope you understand how much your younger siblings look up to you. In many ways, you are their heroes. If you listen, you might hear conversations between them and their friends that goes something like this. “My older brother (sister) is the best \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. No one can do it better than they can.” Or “My older brother (sister) takes me everywhere with them. They don’t treat me like a little pest; they really enjoy time with me. I’m going to miss them when they go to another building, or when they grow up and move away.” Be sure to take their admiration seriously because if you casually take them for granted, at some point you will disappoint them, and their respect will be hard to regain.

Parents, you should be lauded for your choice in choosing our school to educate your children. Unlike many schools, both public and private, ours has a solid financial standing and is supported by a dedicated Board. This Board has made a commitment to keep the school financially sound, regardless of the economy. They have worked diligently to make wise decisions at each step of the way. This is partly because the Board is led by several members with a long history and legacy at the school. You can be certain that they are dedicated to your children receiving the highest quality of education, just like every class before them.

You have shown great wisdom in sending your children to this school where academics, athletics and aesthetics make up the foundation of our mission. With this foundation your children are prepared beyond their years for the challenges in both high school and college. They will be better prepared to develop their strengths, embrace their weaknesses, and discover their unique voice, a process that started at this school. Every school will talk about making certain your child receives a well-rounded education, but this school has a proven record of providing a quality education for its students. We know what it takes to make a well-rounded adult so we strive to make certain that each of our students is offered the opportunity to do more than just read, write and do basic math.

Now that they have completed the 8th grade, they will move up to high school. They won’t simply move to a different room in the same building. By graduating up to high school they will be in a totally different atmosphere than in grade school. Academically and socially they will have more expected of them. But, I am convinced that these students are well prepared to meet those new expectations and will continue to excel in high school as they have in grade school.

So, as the children come forward to receive their diplomas think about the next step they will take. Have you prepared them in ways only a parent can do? Have you talked to them about some of the different things they will experience in high school? Have you prepared them for the different ways that classroom time will be managed? Have you prepared them for the culture shock they will experience going to school with an older group of students? I am sure that each of you parents have done all that you knew how to do, and a few things I hadn’t thought about. Your parenting shows in the behavior of your students and you should all be proud of them. Between us, we have prepared these students to step up into the next stage of their development. I believe they will continue to make us proud.

Congratulations students, now please follow the directions you will receive to come and receive your diplomas.