**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**COSMO TERRIGNO**

Hello everyone!!! To family and friends, colleagues, teachers, administrators and distinguished guests, welcome to this year’s commencement exercises for the Woodland Country Day School graduating class of 2018! To our graduates, thank you for being so dynamic in showing all of us just how terrific a graduating class can be. Although I don’t play favorites and I really do love witnessing the academic and personal growth of **all** of our students, I have to say, this year’s seniors demonstrated exceptional ability, enthusiasm, and potential.

Graduates, many of you have been at Woodland Country Day for more than several years. As your parents made selfless, considerable contributions to your education, and as the faculty was entrusted to provide you with the most outstanding educational and social foundations we would be able to create, each one of you reaffirmed our faith in our academic mission. As a group “in training” to become the next in line to be this country’s leaders, professionals, and shape shifters, you, my **SENIORS, DID NOT DISAPPOINT**. The investments shared among all of us... investments of time, money, patience, encouragement, insight, **MORE patience**... (**Wait for the laugh**) will pay tremendous dividends, and I know I speak for all of the adults present when I say that we are all so proud to have contributed to such a special group.

Your time at Woodland Country Day School produced all kinds of positive, gratifying results.... for **YOU** and for all of us that encouraged you. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What lies behind us, and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies **WITHIN** us.” Graduates, you’ve spent the past four years of your high school careers developing your knowledge base as well as your character, your talents, your interests, and your inner compass. As you head off into the world, remember that in order for you to make a mark on this planet... or even your home and your community, you must **believe** in yourselves. J.K.Rowling, someone who knows a thing or two about magic reminds us, “We do not need magic to change the world, we carry the power we need inside ourselves already. We have the power to **imagine** **BETTER**.” Building on and expanding your lives after high school will bring you new challenges and some trials, but if you keep alert and trust your imagination and your guts... you’ll also continue to learn many precious lessons.

I want to point out that although, as you leave this school and go on to the next phases of your lives, you, this graduating class, have shown all of us what great potential you have.... both as a group and individually. I have noticed... and remarked to others... that this is a very special group, filled with innovative, creative, caring, disciplined, and dedicated students. (**Do you want to call on anyone in particular? If so, you can say**) Who will forget how \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wowed all of us with his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... or the beautiful artwork created by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ showed us what it looks like to be an effective and compassionate leader as President of the senior class. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... don’t think I wasn’t looking..... **very carefully** and taking notes!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Each one of you left a special mark on this school, your fellow students... **in all grades**, and your family and friends. Even now, as the semester and the year have drawn to a close, I look back and can’t help but smile when I think of the good will and friendship I saw so freely demonstrated throughout. I marvel at the way you “elder classmen and women” love and care for all of your fellow students, starting with your little brothers and sister in kindergarten all the way to this year’s juniors.... everyone felt included.... and they **WERE**. You made a lasting and positive impact on all of the groups and individuals that benefitted from your many hours of selfless community service throughout your time here at this school. Woodland’s underclassmen have looked up to each one of you and admired your work and progress, and because of your collective dedication to excellence, next year’s seniors will be inspired to even greater accomplishments.... and that clearly shows that you got the message, and that kindness, compassion, and commitment go a very long way.

I also have to mention that this graduating class of caring, inclusive students probably hold the unofficial title of “**Most Hugs Freely Given**” than any other graduating class in recent memory and probably exceeds the combined total of every other graduating year!! ... I wish I had a “clicker” to take count.... it seemed like every time I walked in the hall or passed an open classroom, the “**hug count**” increased... for teachers, underclasspeople, administrators, friends.... what a gratifying way to show such sincere appreciation!!! (**If you want to make a joke you can say**).... and all things considered, even with these “**rampant” hugging “bandits**,” flu season was pretty manageable this year.... I’m sure even Nurse \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ got her share of appreciation too!!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

Some wise soul once said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Graduates, it’s now your time to take what you’ve learned and show us what you’ve got! Remember to stay alert throughout everything you do... learn to trust your inner compass to take you where you need to go... and if you trip a little or miss a bit along the way, learn from **THAT** too... and trust you will be wiser from having learned from each experience. I want to thank **ALL** of the members of this fine graduating class for what **YOU** have taught **US**.... for the memories you leave for us, and for the unimaginable ways in which you have enriched **OUR** lives.

I’m about to cut all of you loose to conquer the world, but just remember, you will always be welcome to come back and visit... to let us know how you’re doing, and to show us that the “**art of the hug**” lives on!!!! Congratulations and thank you!!!