**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**COSMO TERRIGNO**

Families and friends, teachers and administrators, students and graduates, colleagues, neighbors, and distinguished guests, I want to welcome all of you here today to Woodland Country Day School as we celebrate the Class of 2019 upon the fulfillment of their academic requirements. Each year at this time, as we gather, I stand before you here on the porch of Ivy Manor, and we honor the graduating class. For you students that have witnessed the progression of time and experience throughout the years, eagerly awaiting **YOUR** time, it’s finally here!! It’s now your turn to take your place in the history of this school. And as you’ve watched and waited and wondered what happens on the “other side” of graduation day, whether or not you’ve realized it, you’ve always been a part of the legacy of WCDS. If there were a theme to guide us through this rite of passage, I think... I **KNOW**... it would have a lot to do with recognizing, building, and strengthening the foundations you will rely on throughout your lives. It’s neither an accident nor a coincidence that each year, we hold this ceremony, right here on this porch. It is a valiant symbol of the importance and reliability of a strong and timeless foundation.

“If these bricks could talk,” they’d tell stories of what life was like for the past century and more. We can learn a great deal from what this building has witnessed from private home to school, from housing a few to serving many, from being shiny and new to needing updates and renovations to keep its spirit current, and its strength and resilience teaches us what it means to adapt to the times in which we live. ...And **YOU**, our bright, eager, graduates, are going on to new places... new schools... new adventures that will continue to feed your minds, build your character, and strengthen your foundations so that you, too, can be prepared to respond and adapt to the future in which you will live and lead.

Leonardo Da Vinci said, “The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding.” Gaining that understanding is a team building experience. We, the administrators and faculty of Woodland Country Day School, are proud and humbled to have the opportunity to partner with, and learn from you, our students, and your families. Each interaction, each experience serves to strengthen us as individuals and as a “team.” As well as you graduates have learned from your lessons and from each other, we have learned from **YOU**, and that is a gift that never gets old! It’s been said that “learning is like becoming mature. You’re not suddenly richer, happier, or more powerful, but with each day you gain a greater understanding of the world around you. Absorbing life’s lessons is not about finding perfection... it’s about teaching you to see and feel and think in order to have an enriched and fulfilled life.”

...And I must say, this class has shown us how to do that!! Although there are just eight of you graduating today, you’ve proven to be a mighty bunch! You’ve served your community in countless ways... you’ve encouraged our underclassmen... Your curiosity about life... your enthusiasm about your lessons... your dedication to one another and the world around you have distinguished you and have inspired us to acknowledge just what can be accomplished with a strong foundation and a supportive environment. I want to thank all of the parents and families that recognize the importance of participating in this community and for working with us as we continue our mission to educate the “whole person.”

Graduates, on the other side of this ceremony is your future. You will be leaving this trusted, secure setting and moving on to “bigger, better” adventures... in education and in life. I want you to know that, as B.B. King said, “The beautiful thing about education is that no one can take it away from you,” You’re moving on to high school... to larger classes, busier schedules, and greater challenges, but never forget that you have something that cannot be taken from you, and that’s the experience, education, and connections you’ve gained from being here. Whether you realize it or not, you’re sitting next to lifelong friends.... and if you don’t believe me... check back in thirty... forty... **fifty** years!! (**Wait for the laugh**). ... Welll... while I might not still be here, I have a feeling this porch probably will be... and it will remain a symbol of the legacy you’ve inherited. Always remember, even if it’s virtually, that you are a part of this place and have a piece of this foundation planted within you. Find the strength to use the lessons you’ve learned here to build strong, successful, and fulfilled lives. A large part of what you’ve learned here is to trust yourselves... To not accept anything at face value... to not believe or accept an idea just because someone “says so.” You’ve learned to question a concept and not to settle for anything less than authenticity... and you know how to find that... and if there’s a chance that you might have a question, reach out to those you trust... and soon enough, with sufficient practice, you will become the trusted, wise people you were meant to be. Never forget that you’ve learned to “Choose the hard right over the easy wrong.”

In closing, I want to remind you of a saying I recently saw.... “**NOTHING** is impossible.... the **VERY WORD** tells us, I’m **POSSIBLE**!!” We’ve done our best to give you the tools to strengthen your imagination and build your inner foundations to approach your futures with enthusiasm, curiosity, and limitless possibility. It is now **YOUR TURN** to show us how it’s done... I want to congratulate all of you... have a wonderful experience in high school and beyond, and remember, you are a permanent part of the Woodland family... don’t forget to check in and let us know how you’re doing... we’ll be waiting!!! Thank you all!!