**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**COSMO TERRIGNO**

To parents and friends, faculty and administrators, distinguished guests and, most of all, **graduates**, I want to welcome all of you to the commencement ceremony for the graduating class of 2020 at Woodland Country Day School. The cycle of time provides the opportunity for study, advancement, acknowledgement, and renewal. It provides challenges and teaches us to find strength and purpose in resolution... in learning how to live in “new normals...” to adjust to the times, and, if we’re really lucky, the lessons we learn work to build strong, resilient, informed and adaptable foundations. So far, the year 2020 has proved, hands down, to be one of the great teachers we might ever meet in our collective lifetimes. 2020 also presents one of the most mighty graduating classes that WCDS has ever had the privilege to educate, and, of course, in turn they have taught us.

Although this class is small... there are just eight of you, it was clear from the very beginning that all of you together, and each one of you individually, represent the special qualities needed to be leaders and change makers of the future... and as we, the faculty and administrators, got to know you and work with you, we saw wonderful traits emerge and develop. This “**mighty eight**” showed us uniqueness of spirit and diversity of personality, but when it came to the essential points that wind up to really **defining** a person, we saw a group that was caring and nurturing, dedicated, smart, and truly involved, both in doing their schoolwork and in leading the underclassmen and the rest of the school. I really don’t recall another class, in recent memory, so ready to really live by the words of the Woodland prayer... “... to help others at some cost to themselves.” While they were willing to sacrifice their own time, they also innately realized that to give is to receive... that in the act of selfless sharing, **THAT** is actually the gift. ... that doing for others... service before self... is truly what the world needs right now. These students had demonstrated that long before the current global crisis, and as a result, they are that much closer to finding a meaningful place in a new, sometimes strange and unfamiliar world in which we all now find ourselves.

Yes. This class of 2020 has shown us that the mission and intention of this school really does work! Ever since preschool! Through the lower grades, and up to this point, each of these graduates has demonstrated what it means to be a caring, interrelated, compassionate community. The affinity they have and nurture for one another is welcome and often expected, however, this group has literally “taken it to the streets,”. Their affinity knows no bounds and it extends to their fellow students, friends, and their devoted, proud family members. As we “adults” and “authority figures” watch over and guide these students, each one of us... whether faculty, parents, or staff, is indeed, very, **VERY** proud. And while we adults are proud, the “little brothers and sisters” in the kindergarten class are, smitten. Our graduates have established priceless relationships with our youngest students. Can you imagine how that caring dynamic has so positively affected the young children? As I may have paraphrased the documentarian, Michael Apted, in the past, it’s still so meaningful...“Give me the child .... and I will show you the adult,”... knowing that these “little brothers and sisters” have been nurtured so well at such a young age, gives all of us a reason to smile and see more than a glimmer of hope for a bright future... for them and for us.

This year is special... and stands out for several reasons... Yes, this is a great class and I speak for all of us when I say that we are so proud and thankful to have been “taught” by them. It is also Woodland Country Day School’s **SIXTIETH** anniversary, and, of course, as the “elephant in the room” or “**on the Zoom**” (**depending on how you deliver this speech...)** we cannot forget to acknowledge the **beast**... this school year found itself smack in the middle of the Covid 19 pandemic. The school year may have been cut short, but the same can’t be said for the spirit, enthusiasm, and wonderful, intellectual curiosity and willingness so abundantly demonstrated by each member of this class. Students, you’ve faced your frustrations and concerns like true champions. You’ve shown us all an understanding of what matters most... you faced each twist and turn that history has been writing, with poise and grace and an understanding of what counts. Your ability to adapt, maintain, and even **grow** that spirit, helps to show us the way. Whether in person or having adapted to online learning, you’ve stayed the course; you’ve honored the school’s mission. You still find ways to learn, to grow, and to support others to find their own way... you’ve shown that no matter what fate and adversity might send our way, you will not be daunted... you will continue to show the value in a great education... you are all soldiers at the front line, proving that learning is worthwhile... and the educational experience is **FUN**... no matter what!!

Graduates, while your time here is now complete, the best is yet to come. As you advance through your educational careers, never forget that you’ve got your Woodland education to guide you, remind you, and protect you as you meet the coming demands you will face, both academically and socially. A good, worthwhile education is something that no one can take from you. It’s yours, you’ve earned it. Refer to it often and **build** on it.

You have the framework... the wisdom expressed in the school prayer... “Help us to stand for the hard right against the easy wrong”... “Teach us to work as hard and play as fair in your sight alone, as if all the world saw” ... “Forgive us when we are unkind and help us to forgive those who are unkind to us”  and, of course, as you leave the nurturing halls of Ivy Manor, never forget, “Send us chances to do some good every day and so to grow more in your grace and favor.”

I think I’ve said just about all I can.... except... go forth... do good.... remember to be kind... use your intuition, and find **YOUR** place in this world to make a difference... and, of course, **CONGRATULATIONS**!!! Thank you all!!